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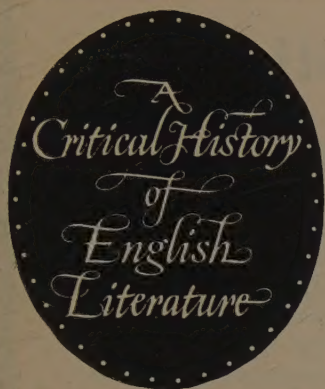
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EDITOR: A. NORMAN JEFFARES
Professor of English Literature at the University of Leeds

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Editorial

LITERATURE, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth. An American will assure you that neither *The Catcher in the Rye* nor *Lolita* represent the youth of the United States. A Russian will tell you that neither *Not by Bread Alone* nor *Dr Zhivago* mirror life in the Soviet Union. And one may be driven to explain that young men in a hurry for money, ambitious and honest, may lose bitter anger surprisingly quickly if the sugar of success is pushed their way. It must be hard, and even at times impossible, to be a cultural attaché, with the task of representing the best of a way of life and having at the same time to discount the view of that way of life which is usually taken by the latest writers and indeed many of the established ones as well.

Literature at its best is written from an individual viewpoint rather than a bureaucratic brief. Its effect may be formative, but that depends largely upon the character of its individual reader; it can, however, focus attention upon some particular aspect of man's activity, and this depends for its success upon the integrity of the writer. Where does the critic come in?

The problem of explanation, particularly when the explanation is to be given to the stranger without or within one's gates, is decidedly difficult. To begin with, the stranger may be no *tabula rasa*; he may indeed be conditioned. His own literature, literature in general, or even our literature may have already formed him, sealed him, annealed him so that the critic's words affect him not a jot. He or she may come to England, shall we say, to discover Dickensian diversions in the olde worlde inns to which the warm-hearted back-slapping rib-nudging advertisements for tourists have drawn attention, or again he or she may have come to search for the subtleties of the class war lurking in the blacking factories because his or her political dogma has decreed that these

are still part of the English way of life. And, equally so, to a view of England founded upon fortuitous reading (as fortuitous for the individual is the travel brochure as the set school text; both have been thrust upon him; both are hard to avoid); how are we to suggest that the Forsytes have abandoned their Cockburn in favour of cider with Rosie?

One answer is obvious; it may be useful to critic as well as reader (stranger or brother), even to unorthodox cultural attaché as well as orthodox anti-establishmentarian. There can be many, very many, different viewpoints. The old idea of democracy, in fact, which owes not a little to literature, to the tangledly grandiose yet intensely intelligent ideas Thucydides put into the mouth of Pericles in the first honest analytic *History* ever written: 'We are not suspicious of each other, nor angry with our neighbour if he does what he likes; we do not put on sour looks at him which, though harmless, are not pleasant.' *Quot homines, tot sententiae*, in fact. There are often too many sour looks in contemporary criticism, and a number of them arise from specialism.

Specialism in criticism can be exclusive, with its OK books, whether they are prescribed by political theorists or theologians, whether they arise from personal heresies imparted to perfervid disciples, or whether they are the bare minimum, the lazy man's load of generalisations which rock uneasily and therefore the more dogmatically upon an inadequate base of open-minded reading.

In other words, if you don't like the world of layabouts, spivs, homosexuals and ineffective intellectuals in the work of one novelist, try the earnest hard-working committee men and unselfish civil servants of another; and remember that you may not feel a cultural attaché is really earning his portion of your income tax if he very rightly says that both, and neither, represent his country, for literature, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth, respecting in its self-respect nor creed, nor class, nor country so long as it carries with it the integrity of its ideas.

A.N.J.

Snakes in the Grass

(With particular attention to Satan, Lamia, Christabel)

KATHARINE GARVIN

SERPENTS creep. They are the present participles of *serpo*, I scrawl, used of beasts, Greek *ἐρπω*, a verb represented also in Latin by *repo*, used also of people. Snakes sneak, although nothing connects the schoolboys' verb with O. E. *snican*, to crawl. Symbols of pride (they can climb, too, of course), they are paradoxically emblems of humility, the quality of being level with earth; thence came the mistaken belief that they ate dust.

'Latet anguis in herba.'¹ Here is the primary characteristic; the snake lurks in the grass; from physical lurking derives the concept of treachery. Lady Macbeth says to her husband:

Look like th'innocent flower
But be the serpent under't².

Throughout this play, Milton's Satan's prototype unfolds this metaphor so adequately that it perfectly mirrors his character. With what strange, delightful surprise St. Exupéry shocks us when he borrows the identical image to describe a stream dangerous to aeroplane landings:

Ah! je me souviendrais du serpent de Motril! Il n'avait l'air de rien, c'est à peine si, de son léger murmure, il enchantait quelques grenouilles, mais il ne reposait que d'un œil. Dans le paradis du champ de secours, allongé sous les herbes, il me guettait à deux mille kilomètres d'ici. A la première occasion, il me changerait en gerbe de flammes. (*Terre des Hommes*)³

¹ Vergil, *Ecl.* iii, 93.

² *Macbeth*, I, iv, 64-65.

³ Ah, I should remember the Motril snake! He looked like nothing; barely, with his gentle murmur, did he cast a spell on a few frogs, but he slept with one eye open. In the Paradise of the landing-field, stretched out beneath the grass, he was lying in wait for me two thousand kilometres away. At the first opportunity he would transform me into a sheaf of fire.

Vergil elaborates the latent serpent in *Aeneid*, II, when Androgeos drops unsuspectingly among Trojans:

obstipuit retroque pedem cum voce repressit.
improvisum aspris veluti qui sentibus anguem
pressit humi nitens trepidusque repente refugit
attollentem iras et caerula colla tumentem.¹

Lurking, it is angered when disturbed. Next comes anger alone. Pyrrhus appears bursting into Priam's house after hewing down the great doors; not creeping, but leaping in shining armour:

qualis ubi in lucem coluber mala gramina pastus,
frigida sub terra tumidum quem bruma tegebat,
nunc, positis novus exitiis nitidusque iuventa,
lubrica convolvit sublato pectore terga
arduus ad solem, et linguis micat ore trisulcis.²

André Chénier rendered this in an enchanting fragment of two lines:

le serpent, aux rayons de soleil
De sa queue à longs plis sillonne la poussière
Et de son triple dard fait siffler la lumière.

This snake eats grass, lurks in earth where mist shelters him; rises and strikes with triple tongue. (Those warded from Titania are only double-tongued.) He ramps like a lion in heraldry rather than creeps.

Nothing is sinister about these snakes, nothing mysterious or magical. They belong to fable, to Aesop, to La Fontaine, having the natural attribute of anger.

Although they are dangerous, they are beautiful. Much lovelier is the serpent in *Culex*, once certainly credited to Vergil, and indubitably in a 'Vergilian' style. A shepherd 'anxius insidiis

¹ *Aen.* II, 378-381. 'He was dumbfounded, and drawing back, checked foot and voice; as one who steps on a snake unexpectedly in the rough briars, thinking he is on solid earth, and terrified, suddenly flees its rising anger as it swells its dark blue neck.'

² *Aen.* II, 471-5. 'As when into the light comes a snake, having fed on evil grasses, whom cold winter kept swollen underground, now, his slough cast off, fresh and glistening in youth, with uplifted breast, he rolls his slippery back, towering towards the sun and darts from its mouth its three-forked tongue.'

nullis', fearing no treachery, lies down 'in herbis', relaxes in sleep. Suddenly:

solitum volvens ad tempus tractibus isdem
immanis vario maculatus corpore serpens,
mersus ut in limo magno subsideret aestu,
obvia vibranti carpens, gravis aere, lingua
squamosos late torquebat motibus orbis:
tollebant irae venientis ad omnia visus,
iam magis atque magis, corpus revolubile volvens
attollit nitidis pectus fulgoribus, effert
sublimi cervice caput, cui crista superne
edita, purpureo lucens maculatur amictu,
aspectuque micant flammaram lumina torvo.
metabat sese, circum loca, cum videt ingens
adversum recubare ducem gregis, acrior instat
lumina diffundens intendere et obvia torvus
saepius arripiens infringere, quod sua quisquam
ad vada venisset naturae comparat arma:
ardet mente, furit stridoribus, insonat ore,
flexibus eversis torquentur corporis orbis,
Manant sanguineae per tractus undique guttae,
spiritus erumpit fauces.¹

Here is a regal beast; although the sleeping shepherd arouses pity, sympathy rises for the magnificent creature whose accustomed retreat, even whose bath, has been invaded by a stranger.

Spenser turns this passage honourably, in the style perfected in the *Faerie Queene*, whose slow sweetness suits the reptilian glide:

¹ *Culex*, 160-80. 'A huge serpent, its body variously spotted, gliding along in its usual tracks at its accustomed time, so that, plunged in the mire, it might seek shelter from the great heat, snatching with its flickering tongue at all in its way, heavy with the atmosphere, was twisting its scaly coils in wide movements, its anger as it came raising its sight to all things, now more and more rolling its writhing body, it uplifts its breast with shining flashes, it rears its head on its towering neck, and its crest rises aloft, shining "it is spotted in" its purple coat, and its eyes of flame blaze with a fierce look. It was surveying the places around it, when the huge beast sees the guardian of the flock lying in its way. Rolling "its eyes", it presses on more keenly, and savagely, more often seizes to crush what lies in its path, because someone has come to "its own waters", it makes ready nature's weapons: it rages in mind, it delights in hissing, it resounds with its mouth. The coils of its body twist in upheaving curves; drops of blood remain everywhere along its course; its breathing bursts its jaws.'

this creature of his is as splendid as the Vergilian, but more smoothly sinuous:

For at his wonted time in that same place
 An huge great serpent all with speckles pide,
 To drench himself in moorish slime did trace,
 There from the boyling heate himself to hide.
 He passing by with rolling wreathed pace,
 With brandisht tongue the emptie aire did gride,
 And wrapt his scalie boughts with fell despight,
 That all things seem'd appalled at his sight.

Now more and more having himselfe enrolde,
 His glittering breast he lifteth up on hie,
 And with proude vaunt his head aloft doth holde;
 His crest above spotted with purple die,
 On everie side did shine like scalie golde,
 And his bright eyes glauncing full dreadfullie,
 Did seeme to flame out flakes of flashing fyre,
 And with sterne lookes to threaten kindled yre.

Thus wyse long time he did himselfe dispace
 There round about, when as at last he spide
 Lying along before him in that place,
 That flocks grand Captaine, and most trustie guide,
 Eftsoones more fierce in visage, and in pace,
 Throwing his firie eyes on everie side,
 He commeth on, and all things in his way
 Full stearnly rends, that might his passage stay.

Much he disdaines, that anie one should dare
 To come unto his haunt; for which intent
 He inly burns, and gins straight to prepare
 The weapons, which Nature to him hath lent;
 Fellie he hisseth, and doth fiercely stare,
 And hath his iawes with angrie spirits rent,
 That all his tract with bloudie drops is stained
 And all his foldes are now in length outstrained.¹

The *Gnat* is a fable whose allegory Spenser elaborates by applying it to some injury done to him by Lord Leicester. A creature of fable, too, is the 'green and gilded snake' in *As You Like It*—the

¹ Spenser, *Virgil's Gnat*, 249–80.

means of reconciling Oliver with Orlando—which had ‘wreath’d itself about his neck’, and who:

with her head, nimble in threats, approach’d
The opening of his mouth; but suddenly,
Seeing Orlando, it unlink’d itself,
And with indented glides did slip away . . . ¹

From fable and allegory to myth is not far; nor from myth to religion. Satan, in *Paradise Lost*, ix, roams earth, considering which creature may best serve his cunning. The serpent is fittest ‘imp of fraud’, because it is the subtlest and its cleverness therefore the least suspect. Satan is aware of his degradation in entering into a beast. The serpent is not yet prone; he is *on* ‘the grassy herb’, not in it, ‘not yet nocent’. The creeping quality is Satan. ‘Like a black mist low creeping’, he enters the serpent, and approaches Eve:

not with indented wave,
Prone on the ground, as since; but on his rear,
Circular base of rising folds, that towered
Fold above fold, a surging maze; his head
Crested aloft, and carbuncle his eyes;
With burnished neck of verdant gold, erect
Amidst his circling spires, that on the grass
Floated redundant. Pleasing was his shape
And lovely; never since of serpent kind
Lovelier; not those that in Illyria changed
Hermione and Cadmus, or the god
in Epidaurus; nor to which transformed
Ammonian Jove, or Capitoline, was seen,
He with Olympias, this, with her who bore
Scipio, the height of Rome. With tract oblique
At first, as one who sought access but feared
To interrupt, sidelong he works his way . . . ²
. . . and of his tortuous train
Curled many a wanton wreath in sight of Eve,
To lure her eye. ³

¹ *As You Like It*, IV, iii, 110–113.

² *Paradise Lost*, ix, 496–512. Notice especially that the word ‘redundant’ is correctly used; wave following wave.

³ *Ibid*, 516–18.

Since in the seventeenth century writers had not yet cast off the grand medieval tradition of proudly giving their authority, preferring learning to fancy, Milton is apt to hint generously at his sources. Cadmus's change to a serpent body is thus described by Ovid:

dixit, et ut serpens in longam tenditur alvum,
durataeque cuto squamas increscere sentit
nigraque caeruleis variari corpora guttis
in pectusque cadit pronus commissaque in unum
paullatim tereti tenuantur acumine crura,¹

and the god in Epidaurus is Aesculapius:

vix bene desierant cum cristis aureus altis
in serpente deus praenuntia sibila misit
adventuque suo signumque aras foresque
marmoreoque solum fastigiaque aurea movit
pectoribusque tenus media sublimis in aede
constitit atque oculos circumtulit igne micantes.²

The unlooked-for serpentine appearance of the god in the temple, preceded by a hiss, is surely the hint for the mocking description of Satan's humiliation in Pandemonium after the Fall.

It is when Satan enters the serpent that the creature ceases to be purely natural and is imbued with demoniac power. Biblical commentators suggest that serpents were easily considered to harbour outlandish powers because of their mysterious glide, their commanding glance, and their hissing strike. Satan now parades the beast's subtlety:

more duteous at her call
Than at Circaean call the herd disguised . . .³

¹ *Metamorphoses*, iv, 576-80. 'He spoke, and in the form of a serpent he is lengthened to a long belly, and he feels scales growing upon his hardened skin and his black body variegated with dark blue spots, and he falls onto his breast and little by little his legs develop into one smooth point.' Here perhaps ought also to be mentioned the notorious serpent in *Silius Italicus*, ii, 581-91. It is portentous like Vergil's serpent who killed Laocoon, copies Vergil but is 'caeruleus maculis' as if like Ovid. It is a frigid, boring serpent, and has no bearing on the discussion.

² *Metamorphoses*, xv, 669-774. 'Scarcely had they well ceased when the golden god, in the form of a serpent with a high crest, sent hissings as forewarnings of his presence, and by his coming he moved the statue, the altars, the doors and the marble pavement and the gilded roof, and he halted, rising breast-high in the midst of the shrine, and gazed about with eyes flashing with fire.'

³ *Paradise Lost*, ix, 521-2.

... Oft he bowed
His turret crest and sleek enamelled neck,
Fawning, and licked the ground whereon she trod.
His gentle dumb expression turned at length
The eye of Eve to mark his play; he, glad
Of her attention gained, with serpent tongue
Organic, or impulse of vocal air,
His fraudulent temptation thus began.¹

Milton is uncertain whether Satan spoke with the serpent's tongue, or himself pushed the air to produce sounds. In Keats's *Lamia*, the lovely lamia serpent speaks:

Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake
Came, as through bubbling honey, for Love's sake.²

Keats suggests the same difficulty as Milton's; is it the snake talking or its inmate (Milton's word)? Other touches hint at a memory of Milton. *Lamia* is moaning 'miserable me', when Hermes:

The God, dove-footed, glided silently
Round bush and tree, soft-brushing, in his speed,
The taller grasses and full-flowering weed,
Until he found a palpitating snake,
Bright and cirque-couchant in a dusky brake.³

This is the supreme snake in the grass. Satan's serpent is remembered in 'cirque-couchant'; he lies in 'many a round', and it is perhaps not fanciful to think that the happy combination 'cirque-couchant' sprang from the Circaean reference in the Miltonic passage. More direct, later, is the reference; when *Lamia* charms the god to transform her to a woman by telling him she has preserved his loved nymph:

the charmed God began
An oath, and through the serpent's ears it ran
Warm, tremulous, devout, psalterian.
Ravish'd, she lifted her Circaean head,
Blush'd a live damask, and swift-lipping said ...⁴

¹ *Ibid*, ix, 524-31.

² *Lamia*, 64-65.

³ *Ibid*, 42-46.

⁴ *Ibid*, 112-16.

A hiss hides in the lisp. Lamia's splendid body goes back to the other Latin, Spenserian and Miltonic passages quoted, although Keats outdoes the other poets in exotic splendour befitting his fantastic theme:

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
 Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;
 Strip'd like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
 Ey'd like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd;
 And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
 Dissolved, or brighter shone, or interwreathed
 Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—
 So rainbow-sided, touch'd with miseries,
 She seem'd, at once, some penanced lady elf,
 Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.¹

She resembles a fairy transformed as a punishment, or the devil himself, whose appearance we have already seen. Keats continues:

Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
 Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar:
 Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet!
 She had a woman's mouth, with all its pearls complete:²

Uriel in *Paradise Lost* (iii, 625) also wears a tiar. In the same poem:

close the serpent sly,
 Insinuating, wove with Gordian twine
 His braided train, and of his fatal guile
 Gave proof unheeded . . .³

Virgil's Pyrrhus, appearing cobra-like, is 'luce coruscus aena', directly or deviously suggesting 'dazzling hue'. *Culex* contributes the 'maculatus', 'pectus nitidis fulgoribus', 'lucens purpureo amictu', developing into Spenser's 'speckles pide', and Spenser uses 'glittering breast' and adds 'wreathed pace'. Lamia calls her snake body 'this wreathed tomb' (l. 38) and Hermes addresses her

¹ *Ibid*, 47-56.

² *Ibid*, 57-60.

³ *Paradise Lost*, iv, 347-50.

as 'beauteous wreath' (l. 84). Milton also makes Satan 'curl many a wanton wreath', and although his description, less flamboyant, is more majestic, he keeps the crest, gives carbuncle eyes, and a neck of burnished gold. Ovid's Cadmus has 'caeruleis guttis', and Aesculapius is 'cum cristis aureus altis'. What a wealth of poetic store has flowed together to fire Keats's superbly sensual evocation of the Lamia!

Now comes her evil essence. Everyone knows the passage from the *Anatomy of Melancholy* appended to *Lamia*. It sketches barely the meeting of Menippus with the 'phantasm'. Lamias have more history than this. They occur twice in the Vulgate. Isaiah xxxiv. 14, reads:

Et occurrent daemonia onocentauris et pilosus clamabit alter ad alterum: ibi cubavit lamia, et invenit sibi requiem. (The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech-owl also shall rest there and find for herself a place of rest. Authorized Version.)

The Authorized Version's 'screech-owl' equates with the Vulgate's 'lamia'; Knox has 'vampire'. Secondly, in the *Lamentations* of Jeremiah occurs the pathetic reproach:

sed et lamiae nudaverunt mammam, lactaverunt catulos suos: filia populi mei crudelis, quasi struthio in deserto. (Even the sea-monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. Authorized Version.)

This passage is in the Breviary as part of the office for Holy Saturday. It is not the only time that Keats arouses a suspicion of having handled a breviary (compare 'psalterian' above). 'Yet you know, Severn,' he said shortly before he died, 'I cannot believe in your book—the Bible.' Little wonder, if he singled out lamias from it! Knox abolishes the lamias in this passage, translates 'cub of jackals is fed at dam's breast', and frigidly footnotes that 'the word used in the Hebrew text is represented in the Latin by an obscure and inappropriate rendering'.

This banished obscure and inappropriate word is 'lamiae', for which the Greek text has δράκοντες. Much more interesting is

it that in Isaiah, the Greek has *δνοκένταυροι*, mythical animals, but the Hebrew has the word 'lilith'. 'Lilith has lain down and has found herself rest.' Here we touch a demonological source. Lilith is best known as Adam's first wife; but *lilith* is also a common noun, a certain kind of evil spirit; she is equivalent to the Greek *lamia* and the Arabian *ghul*, our ghoul. Lilith herself (or themselves) is a Babylonian borrowing, taken at some time during the Exile. The root of the word probably means night (although one scholar has suggested wind), but folk etymology certainly held it night. Lilith's powers were strong at night; she devoured children, and was dangerous even to grown-ups. Sometimes she inhabits a serpent, sometimes a screech-owl.

Why was the screech-owl alternative to a serpent? One can merely guess; *screech-owl* and *strix* are both onomatopoeic words. Might *lilith* (so romantic sounding in English from its likeness to *lily*) also sound like an owl's wailing, especially as apparently it is pronounced *liléeth*? Both creatures inhabit desolate places and employ dark times. Also C. G. Jung, who says much in his *Psychology of the Unconscious* (tr. 1915) about lilith and lamias, narrates that Lilith strove with Adam for mastery:

But Lilith raised herself into the air through the magic of the name of the God and hid herself in the sea. (p.279).

Jung gives no source, but his phraseology sounds as from an old wording. According to Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible*, Lilith figures largely in the rabbinical writings. The interest of Jung's account is that whereas most commentators say that Lilith flew away, which would be natural for an owl, he says raised in the air, which would be consistent in a demon snake. Jung goes on to associate lilith and lamias with the terrible mother who swallows and devours, sometimes seen as a huge fish (Aristophanes uses the word twice in this sense), or the sea itself.

Of interest, then, is Pausanias's reference (Book x, c. 12) cited by Lemprière in the 1792 edition of the *Classical Dictionary* which Keats could have seen. Pausanias tells of a Sibyl named Herophile, who called herself the daughter of Zeus and Lamia, the daughter of Poseidon.

The evil liliti inhabiting serpents is akin to the djinn (which could be working for either good or evil, as pantomimes still remind us) and also to *shaitans*. We are back at our old enemy, Satan.

In the early lore, the animals themselves possessed demoniac powers, which are not thought of as able to separate themselves from the animal forms. Milton shows Satan entering the animal, and Keats shows Lamia changed to a woman. In the lamia and kindred legends, the creature has the face and form of a beautiful woman down to the waist; below it is serpent. Here is the interest of Keats's description of the demon's mistress or the demon's self. 'O serpent under femynynytee', as Chaucer calls the Sultana in the *Man of Lawes Tale*.¹

Diodorus Siculus gives the better-known account of Lamia, that she was a queen of surpassing beauty. Her own children died (other references tell us why; they were Zeus' children, and Hera jealously destroyed them). Envyng the happiness of all other women in their children, she ordered that the newborn babies be snatched from their mothers' arms and straightway slain.² Diodorus quotes two lines from Euripides commemorating her shameful name. Her cruelty defaced her beauty, and she became θηριώδη or brutal-looking. We are reminded how Satan's beauty became defiled. In a gloss to Theocritus, Lamia is the definition of a μορμώ, a monster, and is described as a queen who destroys children.

Philostratus' own account is much more moving than the Burton synopsis appended to *Lamia*. The crucial interview between Apollonius, his pupil Menippus the Lycian, and the supposed bride is too good to be given out of the Greek. Apollonius said:

ἡ χρηστὴ νύμφη μία τῶν ἐμπουσων ἔντω ὅς λαμίας τε καὶ μορμολυκίας οἱ πολλοὶ ἡγοῦνται. ἐρῶσι δ' αὐταὶ καὶ ἀφροδισίων μὲν σαρκῶν δὲ μάλιστα ἀνθρωπείων ἐρῶσι καὶ παλιύουσι τοῖς ἀφροδισίοις οὓς ἂν ἐθέλωσι δαΐσασθαι.³

¹ Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, ii, 360.

² *Diodorus Siculus*, xx, 41.

³ *Vita Apollonii*, IV, xxv. 'The happy bride was one of those vampires whom the people consider lamias and hobgoblins. They love, and they love the rites of Aphrodite and especially human bodies, and they decoy by the rites of Aphrodite those whom they would wish to feast upon.'

Keats may not have known Philostratus, but surely there is a tradition here for Keats's explanation how, when transformed into a virgin's form, Lamia was yet 'in the lore Of love deep learned to the red heart's core'.¹

It is strange, considering how many native or naturalised fairies these islands possess, that Wyclif uses lamyes in his scriptures. Kipling uses Empusa's crew for small devils who hunted souls between heaven and hell.² Jeremy Taylor also uses empuse for vampire. Horace in *De Arte Poetica* (l. 340) implies that it is inartistic to bring a live child from a lamia's stomach after she has dined; it strains a reader's credulity. Plutarch³ says that the Lamia keeps her eyes in a jar when she goes to sleep. Rossetti somewhat sentimentalises Lilith, the serpent-mother, in *Eden's Bower*.

This store of Lamia history throws light also upon Coleridge's *Christabel*. Screech-owls, echoing *Macbeth*, accompany the midnight introduction. Bracy's dream envisages a snake of the fable kind, resembling the snake in *As You Like It*:

For in my sleep I saw that dove,
That gentle bird, whom thou dost love,
And call'st by thy own daughter's name . . .
Fluttering, and uttering fearful moan,
Among the green herbs in the forest alone . . .
I wonder'd what might ail the bird,
For nothing near it could I see . . .
I stooped, methought, the dove to take,
When lo, I saw a bright green snake
Coiled around its wings and neck,
Green as the herbs on which it couched,
Close by the dove's its head it crouched.⁴

The snake symbolises the lamia conception that is surely the core of *Christabel's* meaning. Geraldine's surpassing and wild beauty when first seen under the oak; the owlet's scritch as she enters the house, assisted by Christabel—for evil spirits cannot

¹ *Lamia*, 189-90.

² *Barrack-room Ballads*, 1892.

³ *Moralia*, *De Curiositate*, Loeb, vi, p. 477.

⁴ *Christabel*, 531-52.

enter without human assistance; the spurt from the fire illuminating the lady's eye and nothing else, much more alarming because not amplified; these point to a demon. A contributory hint for this invasion comes from so practical a poet as La Fontaine. A villager finds a serpent frozen on the snow, takes it home. No sooner warmed,

Que l'âme lui revient avecque la colère,
Il lève un peu la tête, et puis siffle aussitôt;
Puis fait un long repli, puis tâche à faire un saut
Contre son bienfaiteur, son sauveur et son père.¹

La Fontaine concludes with the motto:

Il est bon d'être charitable:
Mais envers qui? c'est là le point.

Prudence is required as well as innocence. Christabel strayed into imprudence. Eve was not alarmed at the serpent's advance; Mary was doubtful even of the angel. Through imprudence, Christabel helped evil over her father's threshold.

Geraldine, if she is Jung's 'terrible mother', fitly fears the good mother's spirit: 'Off, wandering mother, peak and pine.' She rolls her eyes horribly in her night orisons, draws shuddering breath. Christabel beheld 'her bosom and half her side A sight to dream of, not to tell'.² Finally, Geraldine hypnotises the maiden, and lies down 'as a mother with her child'.

The spell still works on the following morning:

Again she saw that bosom old,
Again she felt that bosom cold,
And drew in her breath with a hissing sound.³

Is the 'old bosom' a hint of what is older even than Eve? Lilith? Not only does the demon devour children, she also seduces man: reference books tell us that, like Milton's fallen

¹ *Fables*, VI, xiii. 'That the spirit returns to him together with anger, he lifts his head a little, then hisses at once, then makes a long coil, then tries to spring upon his benefactor, his saviour and father.'

² *Christabel*, 252-3.

³ *Ibid*, 457-9.

angels, demons can be bisexual: 'For Spirits, when they please/
Can either sex assume, or both.'¹ Geraldine possesses Christabel,
and is beginning to beguile her father (again, through his own
flaw).

A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy;
And the lady's eyes, they shrunk in her head,
Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,
And with somewhat of malice, and more of dread,
At Christabel she looked askance!²

These dull, small, hypnotic eyes are unlike the blazing carbuncles of the Serpent in Paradise, unlike, too, the beautiful, weeping eyes of Lamia:

The maid, alas! her thoughts are gone,
She nothing sees,—no sight but one!
The maid, devoid of guile or sin,
I know not how, in fearful wise,
So deeply had she drunken in
That look, those shrunken serpent eyes,
That all her features were resigned
To this sole image in her mind;
And passively did imitate
That look of dull and treacherous hate!
And thus she stood in dizzy trance,
Still picturing that look askance
With forced, unconscious sympathy.³

This demon is more subtle than a simple devourer; she has begun to occupy Christabel's body through her soul. The full horror expressed in the incantatory style of *Christabel* fulfils the sense if Geraldine is realised as a Lamia or Lilith, demon and vampire.

There are many references to snakes to be found: the Vulgate Old Testament, for instance, mentions 'coluber' several times, the most pertinent reference being: 'Tria sunt difficilia mihi, et quartum penitus ignoro: viam aquilae in caelis, viam colubri super petram, viam navis in medio mari, et viam viri in adolescentia

¹ *Paradise Lost*, 423-4.

² *Christabel*, 583-7.

³ *Ibid.*, 597-609.

talis est et via adulteriae, quae comedit, ed tergens os suum dicit: Non sum operata malum.'¹ The Gospel writers, reporting Our Lord's words 'generation of vipers' use the term ἔχιδνα. It is worth noting that this also is the name of a somewhat similar sea-descended monster, but she bears more resemblance to Scylla, to Spenser's Errour and Milton's Sin than to the Lamia, being rather horrible than treacherous, and an actual Mother, although of evil things.

Creon, in the *Antigone* unjustly calls Ismene a 'viper':

σὺ δ' ἦ κατ' οἴκου ὥς ἔχιδν' ὑφειμένη²

In his self-will, he attributes to Ismene the menace inherent in himself; so Macbeth, as soon as he has embarked on blood, the serpent seeming like a flower, transfers his own snake qualities to the innocent Banquo:

We have scorch'd the snake, not killed it:
She'll close and be herself; whilst our poor malice
Remains in danger of her former tooth.³

Stricken by the news of Fleance's escape, he says:

There the grown serpent lies; the worm, that's fled,
Hath nature that in time will venom breed,
No teeth for th' present.⁴

It is hypocrisy consummate; he has convinced himself that he only is right. 'Evil, be thou my good.'⁵

Lamia is so enthralling that it is difficult, once on its trail, not to see it lurking in many spots. Lady Macbeth herself seems perhaps its inheritor; her alluring charm; she has known the joy of giving suck but is merciless towards others; she calls on evil spirits to inhabit her, praying to be unsexed; the screech-owl is at hand. Her husband, her male complement, is like Satan: 'Angels

¹ Proverbs, xxx, 18-20.

² Sophocles, *Antigone*, 531.

³ *Macbeth*, III, ii, 13-15.

⁴ *Ibid*, III, iv, 28-30.

⁵ *Paradise Lost*, iv, 109.

are bright still, though the brightest fell.' She is proper accessory to the witches, hags that can also be demons, who are female but have male attributes. Other legends echo; Grendel and his frightful dam steal horribly from their haunted mere to devour. Hippolytus is destroyed by Neptune's sea-monster; in reality done to death by his possessed stepmother. Medusa, the snaky-haired, pregnant by Poseidon, is also his descendant.

Destruction overtakes the serpents. The fable-like snakes are destroyed with honest blows, and the demoniac serpents find ruin in other ways. Geraldine's end is unknown, for the prose synopsis of how the poem was to be finished is far from convincing. Lamia vanished at the stare of truth, as does Mélusine, the medieval French serpent wife, together with so many other semi-human wives in romance and lore (like the demon ancestress of the Angevin Kings), who must disappear as soon as their identity is discovered; as did Lilith herself. Although Psyche's husband is not the great serpent her evil-minded sisters tell her he is, he also, a god, vanished when discovered. The last line of *Lamia* has a strangling hint. Lycius' friends found him lifeless, and 'in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound'. The final word sets one thinking of serpentine coils, and their throttling embrace.

Milton found the most brilliant doom for the serpent. 'Because thou hast done this', says the Lord God to the serpent, in Genesis iii. 14, 'thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly thou shalt go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.' Milton elaborates with superb humour. At the very peak of his falsely triumphant announcement of man's fall, Satan hears:

from innumerable tongues,
A dismal universal hiss, the sound
Of public scorn. He wondered but not long
Had leisure, wondering at himself now more;
His visage drawn he felt to sharp and spare,
His arms clung to his ribs, his legs entwining
Each other, till, supplanted, down he fell
A monstrous serpent on his belly prone,
Reluctant, but in vain . . .¹

¹ *Ibid*, x, 507-15.

The form he chose to enter is compelled on him and on all his partisans. The rank and file of fallen angelic armies waiting outside Pandemonium for a victorious appearance see only a rout of ugly serpents. They follow suit, and all are then deluded by a grove bearing simulated Paradise fruits, but eating, find they are chewing ashes:

chewed bitter ashes, which the offended taste
With spattering noise rejected.¹

Some say, adds Milton, that this humiliating transformation is enforced yearly. Could anything be more ridiculous? Could anything be more offensive to Pride than ridicule?

Even so brief a survey shows the tradition of serpent literature to be long and cumulative. Milton drew on *Culex* and on Spenser as well as on his better-known sources, and Keats drew largely from Milton, and from *Culex* or Spenser. Both he and Coleridge drew from the mass of demoniac belief deep buried in the universal memory, and thrown up in folklore and mythology. Both *Christabel* and *Lamia* are richer in meaning, deeper in human value when seen thus rather than as individual flights of the imagination, for poets are treasurers of the cave of the unconscious, can unlock its doors, and the serpents guarding the golden hoard of poetry are as numerous as those in the Book of Kells.

¹ *Ibid*, x, 566-7.

A REVIEW OF ENGLISH LITERATURE. Vol. II. No. 3

The July number, of which the guest editor will be Professor John Butt, will be given to Dickens. The contributions will include: 'Thoughts on David Copperfield' by Arnold Kettle; 'The Critical Autonomy of Great Expectations' by K. J. Fielding; 'Some Observations on the Language of Dickens' by Randolph Quirk; 'The Choral Symphony: Our Mutual Friend' by R. Barnard; 'Francis Jeffrey: Charles Dickens's Friend and Critic' by R. Cleghorn-Thompson; 'The Heroes and Heroines of Dickens' by Angus Wilson; and 'A French View of Dickens's Humour' by S. Monod.

The number will also include four pages of half-tone illustrations including a hitherto unpublished sketch of Dickens by William Allen.

The Law Reports as Sources of English Prose

R. F. V. HEUSTON

THE purpose of this paper is to provide a brief anthology of extracts from the Law Reports of England to show the lay reader that they contain passages not only interesting in themselves by reason of the human conflicts which they illustrate but also in some way remarkable as examples of English prose. I am not concerned with the question how far novelists and playwrights have found a source for their plots in the complexities of legal rules and situations. The debt which authors such as Shakespeare, Dickens and Trollope owe to the law has already been discussed by many writers. Rather am I going to illustrate how lawyers in the course of their ordinary professional lives use the English language. Not many people realise that the law reports contain passages of general interest. Sir William Holdsworth, the great legal historian, has told how he furnished Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch with a number of extracts from different judgements when Q was compiling the *Oxford Book of English Prose* and how Q expressed his surprise and gratification at the high level of literary achievement to be found in them.¹

The characteristics of an English judgement in the High Court are such as to mark it out from any judgement in any other legal system known to me. It is a full and easily flowing account of the issues raised by the parties, the arguments of counsel and the judge's conclusion on the facts and the law. The judge is obliged (by convention and not by any rule of positive law) to write a short essay in support of his conclusion, and this essay, which takes a form dictated almost entirely by the author's own sense of

¹ 'Literature in Law Books', in *Essays in Law and History*, p. 219.

literary style working within the framework of professional tradition, is different from a judgement in, say a French court, in its peculiarly easily flowing style. A French judgement is composed of a number of brief sentences beginning 'Attendu que', in which the issues raised are disposed of with remarkable brevity. This is not so with an English judgement which retains a curiously individual flavour of a leisured and scholarly era. The simplest way of getting the full flavour of an English judgement of this kind is to go to a law library and ask the librarian to give one a volume of the Appeal Cases for the years 1940 to 1945. These volumes report decisions in the House of Lords and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council during the Lord Chancellorship of Viscount Simon. It was a period when the law lords were men of markedly strong legal ability who also had the power of casting their conclusions in a very distinctive literary form. A few minutes browsing in any of these volumes will convince even the most casual reader that there is much of real literary significance in them. The lay reader may have heard something of the Devlin and Radcliffe Reports. Each of these Commissions was presided over by a distinguished judge, and to the initiated it is clear that the form of the Report in each case owes much to the Chairman. All this should be distinguished from the report of a criminal trial, which is what laymen tend to think of when the law is mentioned. We are not here concerned with what H. G. Wells in *The New Machiavelli* called 'those classical anecdotes of blighting snubs, vindictive retorts, and scandalous miscarriages of justice so dear to the forensic mind'. We are concerned here with the judgements rendered in superior courts on points of law. We are not concerned with the evidence given in sensational trials and the judge's remarks upon them when summing-up to the jury. There are many such summings-up, especially in the great state trials of the eighteenth century, which contain some remarkable pieces of English.¹ I shall try in the following pages to produce a brief

¹ A good modern example is the summing-up of Stable J. in *R. v. Martin Secker and Warburg* (1954) on the question of obscene libel. It has been reprinted in several places, e.g. in the Penguin edition of *The Philanderer*, the novel which gave rise to the prosecution.

anthology of extracts which will give some indication of the nature of a good English judgement.

The Law Reports of the English judges go back for at least seven hundred years. It is true that the earlier Reports are not often cited as authority today. They also suffer from the disadvantage of being written in a peculiarly crabbed and vile dialect of Norman French, but still they are there, and on many points they shed much light on mediaeval life and literature. Besides the mere bulk of English judgements there is also the difficulty that, from a lawyer's point of view, the most admirable are often those which deal with highly technical or sophisticated legal concepts in a precise and elegant style. The precision and elegance, however, are of a kind which can be fully appreciated only by the initiated. The layman will not find much pleasure in reading a judgement in which some of the mysteries of the Rent Restrictions Acts or the Income Tax Act are expounded, even though they may be much admired in Lincoln's Inn. I shall try, however, to choose passages which not merely explain some legal problem or issue in a comprehensible way, but are also in some way notable as pieces of English prose.

Let me begin with an old case, *Birkmyr v. Darnell* (1704):¹ The court distinguished between an indemnity and a guarantee in these words:

If two come to a shop and one buys and the other to gain credit promises the seller, 'if he does not pay you I will', this is a collateral undertaking and void without writing by the Statute of Frauds. But if he says, 'let him have the goods, I will be your paymaster', or 'I will see you paid', this is an undertaking as for himself and he shall be intended to be the very buyer, and the other to act but as his servant.

The rule of law, so clearly expounded here, is as valid today as when it was first put forward.

Let me give another example. This time from quite a modern case, *Re Wingham* (1948).² The question for the Court of Appeal was whether a document which did not comply with the provisions of

¹ 1 Salk. 27.

² (1949) P. 187.

the Wills Act, 1837, was privileged as a soldier's will on the ground that the deceased when he made it had been 'in actual military service' within the meaning of the statutory exception. The deceased had been an airman who had made the will during the war while he was training in Canada for operational duties. I will quote from the judgement of Lord Justice Denning:

Before 1677 there were no formalities required in order to make a will. The Statute of Frauds 1677 imposed them, but Sir Leoline Jenkins succeeded in obtaining in the statute a privilege in favour of soldiers and sailors. They were exempted from any formalities. He was an eminent civilian and took the idea from the Roman Law. For the first 172 years that this privilege existed there was no reported case on it. This is perhaps not so very remarkable. The jurisdiction was confined to the ecclesiastical courts which were not bound by precedents, and until the time of Lord Stowell their decisions were not reported. Moreover, on this subject they seem to have been content to act on the certificate of the military authorities. But in *Drummond v. Parish*, a case which has given rise to all the trouble, Sir Herbert Jenner Fust fell into an error. He thought that because the idea of a soldier's privilege was taken from the Roman Law therefore 'in order to ascertain the extent and meaning of the exception the civil law may fairly be resorted to'. Successive courts at first instance have consequently felt themselves bound to ignore the words of the statute and to substitute for them this test: Can this soldier be considered as having been so circumstanced that he would under Roman Law have been regarded as *in expeditione*? Sitting in this court I am free to say that that test can no longer be applied. The words of our statutes are plain English: 'in actual military service.' I find them easier to understand and to apply than the Latin: '*in expeditione*.' If I were to inquire into the Roman Law I could perhaps, after some research, say how Roman Law would have dealt with its soldiers on Hadrian's Wall, or in camp at Chester; but I cannot say how it would have dealt with an airman in Saskatchewan who is only a day's flying from the enemy. Nor can anyone else. This supposed throw-back to Roman Law has confused this branch of the law too long. It is time to get back to the statute. Rid of this Roman test¹ this court has to decide what is the proper test. It must be both simple and certain. Simple because it is to be understood by all ranks, and certain because every soldier must be able to apply it without difficulty in the situation in which he finds himself.

Another judge, who had the ability to expound a rule of law in simple language was Lord Sumner. This is what he had to say in

¹ Professor C. L. Wrenn has told me how much he admires this use of the past participle.—R.F.V.H.

1914 on the question of how far an infant could be made liable in tort for misrepresenting his age by means of which he had fraudulently obtained goods for which he was not liable to pay:

I think that the whole current of decisions down to 1913, apart from dicta which are inconclusive, went to show that when an infant obtained an advantage by falsely representing himself to be of full age, equity required him to restore his ill-gotten gains, or to release the party deceived from obligations or acts in law induced by the fraud, but scrupulously stopped short of enforcing against him a contractual obligation entered into while he was an infant, even by means of a fraud. Restitution stopped where repayment began.¹

The characteristics to which I referred earlier are well illustrated in the judgement of Viscount Simon in *Barnard v. Gorman*:²

I trust that I may be forgiven the digression if I remind your Lordships that the word culprit appears to arise from an abbreviated entry which used to be made on the record of the criminal court engaged in trying a prisoner for felony or treason. The prisoner at the bar was asked how he pleaded to the indictment, and upon his saying not guilty if the prosecutor joined issue this was recorded in the words '*culpabilis: prest*'. That is to say, 'the prosecution says you are guilty and is ready to prove it'. The words were abbreviated in the form '*cul: prit*'. The Clerk of the Court then asked the prisoner 'how wilt thou be tried?' and the prisoner replied 'by God and the country', the last word meaning the jury. It has been suggested that the abbreviation *cul: prit* or *cul: prest*, though really only a record of joinder of issue, came to be understood to be a word addressed to the prisoner, and hence the modern word culprit. It is perhaps some excuse for this excursus that the word culprit is undoubtedly used sometimes to mean the person guilty of a crime, and sometimes, as in the illustration above, to mean the person accused of being guilty, and is therefore another example of the word of narrow or wider import according to the context in which it is found.

Another good example of the same law lord's ability to expound a complicated matter in clear and scholarly style is to be

¹ The name of the case is *R. Leslie, Ltd. v. Sheill* (1914) 3 King's Bench 607, at 618. An infant is not liable for breach of contract if he buys goods which are not 'necessaries'—which are, according to the *Sale of Goods Act*, 1893, 'those suitable to his condition in life and to his actual requirements at the time of sale and delivery'.

² Appeal Cases (1941). 378.

found in his judgement in *Perrin v. Morgan*,¹ in which the House of Lords unanimously set aside a long standing rule for the construction of wills which the lower courts had gradually adopted. The rule, which prescribed that when a testator used the word 'money' in a will that word had to be construed in a strict sense, so that for example, stock exchange property and savings certificates would not pass under a gift of 'money', had been found to be a blot upon our jurisprudence, and it was with pleasure that the House reversed it. This is what Lord Simon had to say:

The fundamental rule in construing the language of a will is to put upon the words used the meaning which, having regard to the terms of the will, the testator intended. The question is not of course what the testator meant to do when he made his will, but what the written words he uses mean in the particular case. What are the expressed intentions of the testator? In the case of an ordinary English word like money, which is not always employed in the same sense, I can see no possible justification for fixing upon it, as the result of a series of judicial decisions, about a series of different wills, a cast iron meaning which must not be departed from unless special circumstances exist. I agree of course that if a word has only one natural meaning it is right to attribute that meaning to the word when it is used in a will unless the context or other circumstances which may be properly considered show that an unusual meaning is intended. But the word money has not got an unnatural or unusual meaning. It has several meanings, each of which in appropriate circumstances may be regarded as natural. In its original sense, which is also its narrowest sense, the word means 'coin'. *Moneta* was an appellation of Juno, and the Temple of *Moneta* at Rome was the Mint. Phrases like 'false money' or 'clipped money' show the original use of English, but the conception very quickly broadens into the equivalent of cash of any sort. The question, 'Have you any money in your purse?', refers presumably to bank notes or treasury notes as well as to shillings and pence. A further extension would include not only coin and currency in the possession of an individual, but debts owing to him, and cheques which he could pay into his banking account, postal orders or the like. Again, going further, it is a matter of common speech to refer to one's money at the bank, or though in a stricter sense a bank is not holding one's own money, and what one possesses is a chose in action,² which represents the right to require the bank to pay out sums held at the call of its customers. Sums on deposit, whether in a

¹ Appeal Cases (1943). 399.

² A 'chose in action' is a proprietary right which can be enforced only by proceedings in court—e.g., the right of a creditor to his money as distinct from the actual possession of it.

bank or otherwise, may be included by a further extension. In considering the various meanings of the word money in common speech one must go even further, as any dictionary will show. The word may be used to cover the whole of an individual's personal property—sometimes, indeed, all of a person's property whether real or personal. 'What has he done with his money?' may well be an inquiry as to the general contents of a rich man's will. Horace's satire at the expense of a fortune hunter who attached himself to childless Roman matrons has its modern equivalent in the saying 'it's her money he's after'. When St. Paul wrote to Timothy that the love of money is the root of all evil, he was not warning him of the risks attaching to one particular kind of wealth but was pointing out the dangers of avarice in general. When Tennyson's northern father counselled his son not to marry for money but to go where money is, he was not excluding the attractiveness of private property in law.

Another great judge whose judgements are distinguished by an extraordinary lightness of touch and a wit verging often upon the sardonic, is Lord Macnaghten. Some of his judgements were collected together a few years ago by one of his family and here is an extract from one of them. It is in the case of *The Great Western Railway v. Bunch* in 1888.¹ The question in this case was the perfectly simple one whether the Railway Company was responsible for the loss of Mrs. Bunch's gladstone bag which she had delivered to a porter at Paddington Station on Christmas Eve. This is how Lord Macnaghten described the way in which the bag was lost, and explained why the Company was responsible for its loss:

Mrs. Bunch no doubt came to the station somewhat early. But the one thing railway companies try to impress on the public is to come in good time, and considering the crowds likely to be attracted by cheap fares during Christmas holidays and the extra bustle and throng of Christmas Eve, it does not seem to me that Mrs. Bunch came so unreasonably early as to relieve the company from the normal obligations following from that receipt. It is impossible to define within the extreme limits of both sides the proper time for arrival; everything must depend on the circumstances of the particular case, but among those circumstances the least important, it seems to me, is the time when the train is drawn up at the departure platform. That, as everybody knows, is a very variable time, over which the passenger can have no control and of which he can have no notice before he comes to the station.

¹ Appeal Cases, 13.31.

Then I think there was nothing in the conversation which took place between Mrs. Bunch and the porter. Mrs. Bunch's question¹ was a very natural one. The answer she received was just what might have been expected. Nine women out of ten parting with a travelling bag on which they put any store would ask just that question. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the same answer would be returned. I do not think this conversation between the parties altered their relations in the least degree. It seems to me almost absurd to treat it as a solemn negotiation by which the lady abdicated such rights as she possessed against the Great-Western Railway Company and constituted this ephemeral and evanescent porter in his individual capacity the sole custodian of her gladstone bag. It was said that if everyone acted as Mrs. Bunch acted in this case railway companies would require an army of porters and it would be almost impossible for them to carry on their business. I quite agree. But I apprehend that if all travellers acted exactly alike, if all travellers arrived at a railway station at precisely the same moment, though the time of arrival were the fittest that could be imagined, there would be no little confusion and possibly some consternation among the officials. Whatever may be the result of your lordships judgement, there is no fear this will have the effect of making everybody act alike. Things will go on just as usual. The fidgety and the nervous will still come too soon. The unready and the unpunctual will still put off their chance of arrival till the last moment, and the prudent may have their calculations upset by the many accidents and hindrances that may be met with on the way to the station. And it is just because of the irregularity of individuals that the stream of traffic is regular and easily managed.

Another interesting judgement by Lord Macnaghten is one dealing with the liability of a master for the wrongful acts of his servants.² In this case the servant was fraudulent and not careless and the argument for the master was that he was not responsible as the fraud had been committed for the servant's own benefit. Lord Macnaghten began:

My Lords, in the office of Grace, Smith & Co., a firm of solicitors in Liverpool of long standing and good repute, the appellant Emily Lloyd, a widow woman in humble circumstances, was robbed of her property. It was not much, just a mortgage for £450 bequeathed to her by her late husband, and two freehold cottages at Ellesmere Port which she bought herself for £540. But it was all she had, and after the order of the Court of Appeal reversing a judgement of Scrutton J., who tried the case with a special jury, she was compelled to appeal to this House as a pauper . . . At the date of the transaction which gave

¹ 'Will this bag be all right with you?'

² *Lloyd v. Grace, Smith & Co.* (1912) Appeal Cases, 716.

rise to this litigation Mr. Frederick Smith was the sole member of the firm of Grace, Smith & Co. He was a gentleman 'devoted', as he says, 'to public works', meaning by that, I suppose, that his proper business as a solicitor was a matter of secondary consideration with him.

It would be hard to find a more arresting beginning to a judgement and he would be a dull student who would not be tempted to read further to find out whether justice was done to Mrs. Lloyd. (It was.)

It would be tempting to cite a little from Lord Macnaghten's great judgement in *Van Grutten v. Foxwell*,¹ in which one of the most obscure and technical of the rules of mediaeval land law, the rule in *Shelley's Case*, was expounded with sparkling wit and humour. (It is said of one distinguished conveyancer that he never referred to the decision in his published works, because he could not bear to cite a judgement which spoke disrespectfully of so well-established a rule of the common law.) But the wit is perhaps too esoteric for those outside Lincoln's Inn.

We may turn now to a recent judgement in which a serious question was discussed in language of peculiar dignity. The question for the House of Lords in this case² was whether a gift to a community of cloistered Carmelite nuns was a valid charitable gift and here is what Lord Simonds had to say:

I would speak with all respect and reverence of those who spend their lives in cloistered piety, and in this House of Lords Spiritual and Temporal, which daily commences its proceedings with intercessory prayer, how can I deny that the Divine Being may in his wisdom think fit to answer them. But, My Lords, whether I affirm or deny, whether I believe or disbelieve, what has that to do with the proof which the court demands that the particular satisfies the test of benefit to the community? Here is something which is manifestly not susceptible of proof. But, then it is said, this is a matter not of proof but of belief, for the value of intercessory prayer is a tenet of the Catholic faith, therefore, in such prayer there is benefit to the community. But it is just at this 'therefore' that I must pause. It is no doubt true that the advancement of religion is generally speaking one of the heads of charity, but it does not follow from this that a court must accept as true whatever a particular judge believes. The faithful must embrace their faith, believing where they cannot prove; the court can act only

¹ Appeal Cases (1897). 658.

² *Gilmour v. Coats*. Appeal Cases (1949). 427.

in proof. A gift to two, or ten, or a hundred cloistered nuns, in the belief that their prayers will benefit the world at large, does not from that belief alone derive validity, any more than does the belief of any donor for any other purpose.

Here is an extract from another Lord Chancellor, but this time in a lighter mood:

Mrs. Dalziell appears to have been one of those enthusiastic sportswomen who demonstrate an interest in nature by seeking to destroy the rarer specimens of her handiwork. She was intrepid, a good horsewoman, a good shot, and had been on sporting expeditions in the Rocky Mountains alone with guides.¹

The judicial ability to produce nuttily-flavoured apothegms is also illustrated by the following miscellaneous remarks:

Even the most clumsy and careless draftsman will sometimes blunder into a form of bequest that is at once precise and legal.²

Mr. Mayo was in financial difficulties, and thought it right and convenient to have only one banking account, which was in his wife's name, and on which she alone could draw cheques.³

The state of a man's mind is as much a fact as the state of his digestion.⁴

Finally, there should be mentioned an excellent example of the facetious, as distinct from the witty or humorous. Opportunities for this style are, very properly, few in a court of law. But Sir Peter O'Brien, C.J., sometimes and perhaps better known as 'Peter the Packer', once had to consider whether the member of the Dublin Corporation could properly make the ratepayers of the city bear the cost of a sumptuous picnic amidst the Dublin mountains when on a tour of inspection of the waterworks. Here is a brief extract from a judgement which can only be described as uproarious:⁵

Now I think it is relevant to refer to the character of this luncheon. I have before me the items of the bill. Amongst the list of wines are two dozen

¹ *Ross v. Ross*. Appeal Cases (1930). 1, at 8, per Lord Buckmaster.

² *Parnell v. Boyd* (1896) 2 I.R. 571, at 576, per Holmes L. J.

³ *Mayo v. Joyce* (1920) 1 U.D. 824, at 892, per Scrutton L. J.

⁴ *Edgington v. Fitzmaurice* (1885) 29 Ch.D. 459, 483, per Bowen L. J.

⁵ *R (Bridgeman) v. Drury* (1894) 2 I.R. 489, at 496.

champagne (Ayala 1885, a very good brand), at 84/- a dozen; one dozen Marcobrunn hock—a very nice hock; one dozen Chateau Margaux—an excellent claret; one dozen fine old Dublin whiskey—the best whiskey that can be got; six bottles of Amontillado sherry—a stimulating sherry; and the ninth item is some more fine Dublin whiskey. Then Mr. Lovell supplies the dinner—this was a dinner and not a mere luncheon—including all attendance, for 10/- a head. There is an allowance for cigars, coachmen's dinner, beer, stout, minerals, and ice for wine. There is dessert and there are sandwiches, and an allowance for four glasses broken—a very small number broken under the circumstances . . . The Solicitor-General in his most able argument appealed pathetically to common-sense. He asked, really with tears in his voice, whether the members of the corporation should starve. He drew a most gruesome picture. He represented that the members of the corporation would traverse the Wicklow hills in a spectral condition unless they were sustained by lunch. In answer to the pathetic appeal of the Solicitor-General we do not say that the members of the corporation are not to lunch; but we do say that they are not to do so at the expense of the citizens of Dublin.

Saturday Movie

Daughter, within the darkened matinée
 I watch you watch the coloured forms invent
 Dwarfs, prince, and girl—and sorceress, intent
 On doing her in to hear the mirror say
 Herself most fair. Once, thirty years away,
 In jeans, I blinked your tears and wonderment,
 Leaning on the cushioned seat ahead, and bent
 To the woody scene where sleeping Snow White lay—
 As you behold, with blue eyes swimming bright,
 The sweet undoing of the apple's charm,
 The unriddling kiss—whose merely tinted light
 I would weep for now, knowing an older harm
 Must lead us out at last in the sun's hard sight:
 An ageing prince with innocence on his arm.

Robert Wallace

Literature and the Children's Book

GEOFFREY TREASE

So well written' (ran a recent review in a literary weekly) 'that one forgets it is a children's book.' This remark, intended not as patronage but as high praise, typifies the general attitude to juvenile literature. The inference, infuriating to the practitioners in this field, is that good writing, like good wine, is really wasted on the young. 'I must admit', said an Inspector of Schools to me the other day, after I had delivered a passionate plea for the contrary view, 'I had never before thought of the children's writer as a literary artist.'

It is surely time, after more than two centuries of book-production specifically for young readers, that this rather obvious conception received some critical examination. During those two centuries our children's authors have been considered, with varying emphasis, as educators and as entertainers. That they have a third potentiality, which might well deserve to be put first, as creative artists in a special field of literature, is an idea which has seldom occurred to any one but themselves.

Frank Eyre, in *20th Century Children's Books* (1952), speaks of the need 'to improve the status of the children's author of integrity, who has in the past had to plough a lonely furrow, often with inadequate reward and always without recognition outside a small circle of specialists'. Any one who doubts the justice of those last words needs only to consult the index of a standard literary history such as Legouis and Cazamian. Nowhere in nearly four-hundred pages is there any discussion of children's literature as such. Lewis Carroll and E. Nesbit, Mrs. Ewing and Mrs. Molesworth, Henty and Ballantyne, find no place in the thirty-four small-type columns of names—they are not thought worthy of even a footnote. Thomas Hughes is included, but proves to be

the Elizabethan dramatist who wrote *Misfortunes of Arthur*, not the creator of that prolific and distinctively English genre, the school story. This estimate of relative importance illustrates the critic's congenital blindness where anything written for children is concerned. For if such writing is not to be accorded any attention in a comprehensive, not to say encyclopaedic, study such as Legouis and Cazamian's, where in Heaven's name are we to expect it? Legouis and Cazamian do not even insist on excellence before they mention an author. The fumbling pioneer, the second-rate disciple, the now-disregarded writer who was in his time a fruitful 'influence'—all these are deservedly included in the roll of honour. Unless, of course, they wrote exclusively for young readers. If they did that, they are consigned to limbo, whether they were in fact (like Carroll) highly original literary artists in their own field or (like Henty and Hughes and Ballantyne) only mediocre writers who achieved a social significance out of proportion to their talent. It was a French Academician, Paul Hazard, looking at those British writers of the nineteenth century, who wrote:

We can disregard the literature for childhood only if we consider unimportant the way in which a national soul is formed and sustained . . . England could be reconstructed entirely from its children's books.¹

Legouis and Cazamian could hardly exclude Stevenson or Kipling. Even Kingsley and Kenneth Grahame have their place, for they had made the grade as 'adult' authors—though the reference to *The Wind in the Willows* seems to suggest that it is a 'study of childhood' rather than a children's classic. To *Treasure Island*, however, our literary historians do justice, in terms which admit a children's author's claim to literary status, although that claim is implicitly denied by all the other strange silences in their book. 'The craft of the story-teller, the intensity of the episodes, the vividness of the exotic scenes and of the main characters, are merits in themselves; but they grow out of a more profound intuition—that of the imaginative appeal, of the dramatic

¹ *Books, Children and Men*, translated by Marguerite Mitchell, Boston, 1943.

progress, and the moral originality of the themes; and this is an intuition of a psychological order. The sinister cripple, Silver, is worthy of a great artist . . .'¹

Would it be ungenerous to suggest that the recognition of a children's writer as 'a great artist' is much easier (and safer for the critic) when that writer has already established himself in the adult field? There have, of course, been many 'adult' authors whose occasional incursions into the 'juvenile' have been at best trivial and at worst embarrassing exercises in condescension. But we should not include in that category writers such as Kipling and Walter de la Mare, or, among the living, Masfield and Day Lewis, Eric Linklater and Naomi Mitchison, C. S. Lewis and Carola Oman and many others whose writing for children is, at its different level, no less skilful and conscientious than their other work.

No one can seriously believe that writers such as these, authors of integrity, abruptly cease to be artists when they complete, say, a novel or a biography and begin a fresh work addressed to children. Any one who has experienced the transition will know that, in some respects, not less art but more is needed. Why then should it be tacitly assumed that certain other authors, who happen not to have divided their energies between several forms of writing but to have concentrated on this one, should be any less entitled to artistic status? One has only to dip into the prose of Rosemary Sutcliff or William Mayne, Mary Norton or J. R. R. Tolkien, writers whose imaginative work has so far been mainly or exclusively for children, to see the absurdity of attempting any such distinction.

That the attempt is, none the less, so commonly made must be attributed to the inability of the average critic to comprehend the attractions and satisfactions of this genre. But *why*, he seems to ask, write for children if one can write well enough for adults? He can understand an economic motive: children's stories often pay better than novels. He can understand a personal and sentimental motive: writing to please a Christopher Robin or an Alice of one's

¹ *A History of English Literature*, revised edition, 1940.

own acquaintance. But the possibility of using children's books like other books, as a means of communicating, interpreting, or at least attempting a modest comment on life, is something which does not occur to him.

There is only one essential difference in function between the 'adult' writer and the children's. The former offers his interpretation of life to his contemporaries, his equals (or, it may be salutary to remember, his superiors) in knowledge and maturity. The latter addresses his juniors, who (he must assume) are in most respects immature, though (again it may be salutary to remember) they may already outstrip him in certain branches of knowledge and may have developed their innate intelligence to a point he has never reached himself and never will. The challenge of this special audience is not a light one. If the writer, like the parent and schoolmaster, enjoys a position of initial advantage, he must be aware also of moral responsibilities and technical limitations. There is no reason why these should not both serve as artistic stimuli.

Here perhaps it would not be unfair to quote some words of François Mauriac, even though he was not referring to children's books:

Of all the compliments that can be paid to a writer, there is one especially that will make him glow with pleasure, namely: 'You are admired so much among the younger generation.' Then his head positively swells, for though he may seem to be detached, what he wants above all things is to get the attention of the younger generation, and if he does not do this he considers he has failed in his mission. Nothing matters to him except that. He has got to reach others, and particularly he has got to reach those who are still capable of being influenced and dominated, the younger mentalities which are hesitating and unformed. He wants to leave his mark on this living wax and imprint all that is best in him on those who are going to survive him.¹

Mauriac admittedly is thinking of the way in which certain major 'adult' writers have set their impress on a younger generation. But though it may take a Shaw, a Wells or a D. H. Lawrence to make this profound effect upon the twenty-year-old, we should

¹ *God and Mammon*, quoted in *Writers on Writing*, ed. Walter Allen, 1948.

not underrate the power of the children's writer to make a lesser impression on the twelve-year-old. Nor should we be too sure that it is 'lesser' or more transitory, because it is harder to isolate and identify years afterwards. We remember all our lives who converted us to a conscious belief, who made us Socialists or Catholics or agnostics, but we are not always so clear about the early reading which lies at the very foundations of our character. In this respect Graham Greene is clearer than most. He has said that his early career in Africa was determined by the profound effect of reading Rider Haggard as a boy—and he has added that, delighted though he would be to hear the announcement of a new novel by E. M. Forster today, it could never equal the emotion he felt, at twelve, when discovering a fresh Rider Haggard on the library shelf. Sir Herbert Read testifies in similar terms:

... my own imagination was most strongly fired by Rider Haggard, and never have I known such absorption and excitement as gripped me when I first read *King Solomon's Mines* and *Montezuma's Daughter*.¹

To set so lasting an impress upon the Graham Greenes and Herbert Reads of the future may not lie within the scope of every children's writer—but at least he will never know, and the glittering prospect will be an incentive to write as well as he can. Meanwhile, there are other boys—and girls. Arthur Ransome, doyen of living children's writers, has indicated what lies within every author's range:

A good book . . . is not merely a thing that keeps a child amused while he is reading . . . It is an experience, something that he lives. It calls upon faculties that grow with use and atrophy without it. It peoples his world and lets him share in other lives, increases by exercise his own power of imaginative living and so enriches life itself for him.²

There is a robust school of thought which holds that this is better achieved by the child's being thrown straight into the

¹ *Annals of Innocence and Experience*, 1940.

² *Four to Fourteen*, ed. Kathleen M. Lines, 1950.

treasure-house of the world's adult literature as soon as he has mastered his letters—and the key presumably turned in the door behind him. This system has worked in the case of exceptional children and, if it were universally applicable, there would be no need for juvenile books at all. Most people, however, would be more inclined to accept the view of Susan Isaacs, that the teacher 'will not try to force immature minds to deal with great works of prose and poetry beyond their powers, since this mortgages the future'.¹

Those who wish to hustle children forward prematurely into the adult field have usually little knowledge of what the junior library offers the young reader of today. Their notions are arrested at the Orwell stage—and Orwell's satirical picture, though it administered a very useful shock at the time, hardly corresponds with the present situation. The New Zealand librarian, Dorothy Neal White, writing straight after the war, could already say:

Children's literature has also changed inwardly: it has broadened its range and increased in depth . . . (it) has been slowly maturing, as modern knowledge—political science, sociology, anthropology, economics—all impinged upon it. Some men and women will regret that children's literature is becoming more and more concerned with the facts of life, in both a political and biological sense, and there may be some cause for melancholy whenever the sweet swift dream of childhood is disturbed. I think, however, that children's literature has gained rather than lost by its new awareness of the world and the way it works.²

In the decade and a half since then, the process has continued and developed. Inevitably, the bulk of the two thousand new children's books which annually flood the market consists of ephemeral, mediocre stuff, concocted to formulae and inspired by fashion—pony-books, ballet-stories, career-documentaries, or whatever is in vogue. Are most of the adult books, which make up the rest of the yearly output of twenty thousand titles, immune from similar criticism? The proportions of grain and chaff are probably much the same. When the winnowing of time has done its work there is a worthwhile residue in both cases. From the

¹ Intro. to *What Do Boys and Girls Read?* A. J. Jenkinson, 2nd edn., 1946.

² *About Books for Children*, 1946.

field of juvenile publishing we garner, each season, a few fine books and a number of good and useful ones. Certainly, in the past quarter of a century, there is general agreement that the standard of historical fiction has been transformed out of recognition; that new ground has been pioneered in the depiction of normal family life, the day school, and the boy-and-girl friendship; that the obsolete upper-middle-class world of nannies and nurseries has been replaced by a more realistic picture of contemporary society; and that, despite all this emphasis upon realism, we are still producing writers of fantasy worthy of the great English tradition.

Obviously, however far he escapes from the old inhibitions about what is 'suitable' for young readers, the author who addresses an immature public can never express himself with the same freedom as, say, the serious novelist. But we are only falling into the new intellectual snobbery if we argue that nothing is truly literature unless it scales the topmost heights and explores the lowest depths. Plenty of books and plays of established literary value fit comfortably within the limits of subject-matter and vocabulary now permissible to the children's writer.

Vocabulary is much less of a limitation than is sometimes realised. Statistical surveys, even of the despised comic, have revealed that the word-range is considerably more varied than was previously imagined—or, as a cynical teacher remarked, 'educationalists have worked out what parents knew all along, that children know a lot of words they are not supposed to'. Simplicity of vocabulary is not necessarily (as many a classic demonstrates) a handicap to good writing, but if a children's author feels the need to use a more exotic word he need not shrink from doing so, especially if he knows how to plant it in a self-explanatory context. He is aware, too, of the child's relish for the picturesque, the colourful, and the musical. The word which is only half-understood, or barely understood at all, may play its legitimate part. In general, though, the bias will be in the direction of clean-cut prose, free of unnecessary abstractions, dead metaphors, and obscure allusions. Though the young reader may not be consciously

appreciative of stylistic beauties as he hurries breathlessly on from page to exciting page, the author has every possible incentive to write the best prose he can. Two reasons will immediately suggest themselves. One is that every children's book must stand the test of being read aloud. The second is that, when it is possessed and really loved, its owner may read it half a dozen times, or even more, until whole phrases and paragraphs are absorbed into the memory. Such books deserve to be well written. How many novels have to stand so searching a test—and how well would they emerge from it?

A children's writer, then, is free to range if not over all phases of life at least over territory sufficiently varied and important to command his interest. He cannot push thought and language to their furthest limits—but how many 'adult' writers, though they have the freedom, have the ability to do so? The children's writer, given the talent, can write as good prose as they. He is quite free to rival them in the writing of dialogue, the depiction of scene and atmosphere. His characterisation (as Stevenson demonstrated) is not to be despised, though he can hardly essay the deeper psychological subtleties. When it comes to the unfashionable craft of plot-construction, he needs not fear comparison with the average contemporary novelist.

These qualities should be enough to entitle the children's writer, when he possesses them in sufficient measure, to consideration as a literary artist. It would be a mistake to claim too much. Most children's writers would admit that the fundamental limitation—the immaturity of their chosen audience—debars them irrevocably from any claim to the higher slopes of Parnassus. But 'minor artist' is a title not without honour, and one with which many authors have been more than content. If it were generally agreed to be attainable by the best of our children's writers, it would mean encouragement to them—and a revolution in juvenile book-reviewing. For, in addition to the old questions, 'Will the children like it?' and 'Will it teach them something useful?' a new question will have to be asked: 'Is it good as literature?' It is high time.

L. H. Myers

RONALD BOTTRALL

LEOPOLD HAMILTON MYERS was born at Cambridge in 1881. He was the eldest son of F. W. H. Myers, who founded in 1882 the Society for Psychical Research. His father was a Cambridge don, whose name, in the days of classical education, was imprinted on every schoolboy's heart, as one of the trio of Lang, Leaf and Myers, who produced the famous 'Wardour Street' translation of the *Iliad*.

He was brought up at Leckhampton House in a mingled atmosphere of Victorian spirituality and spiritualism—'outside the Christian faith or any other religion', as he once wrote in a letter. He was educated at Eton and married an American wife. His comparative affluence enabled him to live most of his life in London in an Ivory Tower in Carlyle Mansions, Chelsea, surrounded by exquisite objects and sustained by exquisite food and wine. This material security may account for the superb poise of his best work and it may be contrasted with the inner uncertainty of much of the writing of E. M. Forster, to whom Myers has often been compared. Forster was a day boy at Tonbridge, and he has never forgotten it. Hence, perhaps, his sentimental idolatry of Cambridge, which gave him all that he had failed to find at school. Myers did not need to sentimentalise Cambridge; he had been born in it and could accept it as easily as the air he breathed.

Forster, like Virginia Woolf and Myers, deals with crucial aspects of society and with human values. They are all concerned with 'the personal relation', with Martin Buber's 'I' and 'Thou'. So was Lawrence, but their emphasis was on the imaginative and emotional side of the relationship, Lawrence's on the physical. Like Lawrence, they are concerned with the distinction between genuineness and fake or unhealthy attitudes; between first-hand experience and second-hand experience. Myers and Lawrence are,

in addition, concerned with truth, moral values and the good life. Virginia Woolf is too impressionistic and Forster too eclectic for either to concentrate sufficiently on universals.

Apart from an early drama in blank verse on an Asiatic religious subject, Myers published nothing till his forty-second year. He followed the excellent example of Stendhal, who waited till he was forty-three before publishing *Le Rouge et le Noir*. In 1922 Myers published *The Orissers*. It is an enormous work and was published in a limited and expensive edition. Even now it is difficult to make a final judgement upon it. This book posits the question of the merits of Myers's work. It is typical and within it reside the germs of the later novels. *The Orissers* has a sensational plot of a thriller type and large tracts of it are written in overstrained, over-coloured language. This amalgam of cliché, slang and purple passage relates it to Elizabethan drama, in particular to Webster and Tourneur. It is a book about unusual attitudes and emotions and only rarely can we relate the world of Eamor to the world of everyday life. Eamor, indeed, is more a symbol than a house.

Myers clearly owes a great deal to his study of contemporary Cambridge writers on ethics: McTaggart, G. E. Moore, T. E. Hulme and Lowes Dickinson. His connection with Dickinson links him once again with Forster and his emphasis on the importance of personal relations. In his description and analysis of these relationships he can be usefully contrasted with Aldous Huxley. Ultimately Huxley remains outside his characters; he rejects the value of personality and of action in the world as it is. He offers instead a woolly mysticism, experienced at second-hand. Myers enters into his characters; rarefied and fastidious though many of them are, he lives with and in them. He believes in the value of personality and the possibility of a spiritual revolution which will alter the shape of material things. Myers views sex sanely, giving sufficient importance to it in his scheme of living; in his work there is not the evasive suppression of sex which we find in Henry James, or the feverish over-emphasis of D. H. Lawrence, or the neurotic fascination and disgust of Aldous Huxley.

The Orissers is a study of opposed groups and an analysis of psychological types; a contrast between the fastidious and the coarse. Allen Allen, the humanist, is the central figure, but he somehow lacks the vitality of the extreme romantic, Cosmo Orisser, or of the extreme materialist, John Mayne. The book has many analogies with *Howards End*, though it is inferior to it in structure and expression. It is a battle between the Orissers, the spiritual forces, and the Maynes, the material forces, for a house, Eamor, the patrimony of the Orissers. But Myers could never solve such a problem by the compromise of a Schlegel-Wilcox marriage and it is a fight to the death. In his *Scrutiny* (June 1934) essay on Myers (the first serious study as far as I know) Professor D. W. Harding quotes the remarkable dramatic passages in which Allen corners the self-righteous Walter Standish in the train and later tells Lilian (an Orisser by marriage and wife of the dying John Mayne) the story of his interview. I will quote a more lyrical passage, where young Nicholas Orisser is reminded of his broken relation with Isabel;

Allen took him up to the window and removed a cover from several objects of wood and ivory. 'Look at these!' said he. 'They are worth it.'

Upon a sheet of pale green glass lay a number of small ointment boxes carved in human and animal shapes. The one that Nicholas' attention fastened on represented a wild duck swimming. Behind the duck, and clinging to it with outstretched arms, was a diminutive maiden, whose slender form, as she was towed along, made a handle to the receptacle. The colours of the painted wood, although partially effaced, were clear and bright. The lines were of a toylike simplicity. The little object had the gaiety of a toy; but it was perfect.

As Nicholas gazed, he felt tears mounting into his eyes. Over their unrippling pond of glass the maiden and her duck were moving down eternity. In conventionalizing the forms the artist had extracted from Nature, and distilled into art, all the charm that those forms, in all their natural associations, had to offer. They expressed dreams, atavistic nostalgias, memories of never-ending recurrences of spring—dreams of rushes, water-lilies, long pipy stems of water-weeds and water-flowers; dreams of soft, sheeny-feathered birds, bird-calls at dawn; dreams, too, of virginal slimness, of girlish bodies, sliding through green waters under a vaporous, rose-flushed sky.

And through the young man's heart there shot a stab of pain. 'Isabel!' he cried within himself. 'Isabel!'

Myers's next book, *The Clio* (1925), deals with similar themes in a very different way. He isolates his world on a steam-yacht, the *Clio*, 'probably the most expensive-steam-yacht in the world'. Like Henry James, Myers normally deals with millionaires and princes. The novel is a light and would-be elegant study of a society party that voyages up the Amazon and finds a revolution. It is clearly influenced by Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*, published ten years earlier, and it is, on the whole, less impressive. The opening chapters introducing the characters (rather in the manner of a high-brow detective story) are extraordinarily badly contrived. The style wavers between sensitive description, acute comment, laboured satire and the higher journalese. In its more ephemeral episodes the book is very *chic* and up-to-date, and it is, accordingly, very dated. But there is in it, what there always is in the work of Myers, a passionate curiosity about the springs of human motives and an exquisite understanding of fundamental values. The death of Sir James Annesley is a masterpiece of intimate, sympathetic analysis:

That night Sir James' sufferings became so acute that he actually longed for death. What a relief it would be to die before day came! What a relief to be dispensed from composing one's face, and answering questions and behaving decently. Nothing was expected of a dead man—lucky fellow! He could rot in peace.

At dawn the monkeys began howling; and they must have been closer to the ship than ever before, for the noise they made was blood-curdling. It was almost unbelievable that so insignificant an animal could produce such a volume of sound—a noise that united the bellow of a bull with the howl of a wounded tigress. Sir James welcomed the uproar. It drowned the exasperating song of the mosquitoes.

As the light increased the air grew cooler and his distress was somewhat mitigated. He took heart from the thought that after all it would not cost him too terrible an effort to conduct himself as he wished. To make a start he dragged his aching body from the bed; and, although he could hardly sit upright, he managed to shave.

A little later the doctor came in. Sir James waited till he had made his examination, then he said:

'My dear McLaren, don't imagine that you can tell me anything I don't already know. It's pretty plain now—what I'm suffering from—blackwater fever. And I know how that ends.'

'There is another man on board who has had all your symptoms', replied the doctor, 'and now he is on the road to recovery.'

Sir James closed his eyes. 'That young fellow is my junior by about thirty-five years', said he.

The doctor gave him an opiate, and then at his request left him. Sir James wanted to contemplate his position quietly. 'Dying is a lonely business', said he to himself, 'but then, so is being alive.'

As he lay in bed, watching the light increase and listening to the morning clamour of the frogs, he wondered whether his remaining span of life would be twenty-four, thirty-six or forty-eight hours. Although his mind was serene, his heart was contracted and chilled by an instinctive abhorrence of death. 'This shrinking is coeval with life', he reflected. 'I inherit it from the amoeba. But reason, though it can do little to make living less difficult, ought at least to make dying easy. Let me remember that to a deep sleeper one second and eternity are the same.'

Between the two parts of his great work *The Near and the Far* (as it was ultimately called) Myers published in 1936 a short novel, *Strange Glory*. This is a beautifully worked-out book and it is not unrelated to a mystical experience that he had in America when a young man. It is in a sense a corollary or appendage to the masterly Indian novels. It traces the growth of a young woman's ability to distinguish between the false attitudes of society and the true attitudes of her friend Wentworth. Paulina, a rich and independent American girl, owing to a clause in her father's will, has to spend a certain amount of time each year in Louisiana. There she encounters in a clearing in the forest an Englishman, Wentworth, who, as she eventually learns, has killed her uncle and served a prison sentence for the homicide. She mistakenly marries an English nobleman, but sees his life and standards as false and falls in love with a young English scientist, Stephen, who has a wife and child in the Soviet Union. Stephen returns to Russia intending to come back with his family, but he and his wife (the daughter of Wentworth) die of typhus, thus solving rather too artificially the moral problem posed, and Paulina is left with the child—a symbol no more convincing than the illegitimate boy playing in the hay-meadow of *Howards End*. Wentworth represents the mystical element in Myers's make-up, Stephen stands for that part of him which desired social reform and personal relationships. Together they exemplify the dualism 'between the animal life of the race

and the volition of the individual', which Myers tried to state and resolve in *The Orissers*.

In *Strange Glory* Myers uses the forests and swamps of Louisiana as he uses the Amazon jungles in *The Clio* and the India of Akbar in *The Near and the Far*, to create an environment outside the normal experiences and pre-conceptions of the reader. Throughout the novel he emphasises the archetypal patterns of human consciousness and behaviour. Wentworth says:

Now think—just think of the thousands, the millions of years of accumulated memories that lie at the base of one's consciousness and bind one to the earth! Think what a tremendous force of feeling is there stored! I conceive of that force as the equivalent in the spiritual world to what gravitation is in the world of matter. It holds us earth-creatures together to form an earth-spirit as compact and distinct and unique as the globe of the material earth. The ordinary man's feeling for Nature is a dim, dim apprehension of this.

From this welter of archetypal experiences, Wentworth strives to select the essential rather than the particular, the genuine rather than the fake:

To throw off the shams and trivialities that cramp and stifle life—that is what we need. And another way of putting it would be this: I want a vision of Man. I want to perfect my vision of the archetypal forms of the human spirit. I want to see Man and Woman and Childhood and Adolescence and Old Age, as Blake, for instance, saw them; and still more I want to discern the forms of Joy, Courage, Mercy, Love, Innocence and Wisdom, as in their essence they are.

As I shall attempt to show later, this is one of the main themes of the Indian novels.

The first of the Indian novels, *The Near and the Far* (the title later given to the whole work), was published in 1929; the second, *Prince Jali* in 1931, and the two together with a third, *Rajah Amar* in 1935 as *The Root and the Flower*.

It is astonishing to recall that *The Times*, in its obituary notice of Myers on 10 April 1944, wrote: 'In 1929 the growing taste for historical novels ensured success for *The Near and the Far*.' Myers has made it abundantly clear in the preface to *The Root and the Flower* that he is not writing historical fiction. He says:

This is not an historical novel, although the action is placed in the time of Akbar the Great Mogul (who was a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth's), nor

is it an attempt to portray specifically oriental modes of living and thinking. I have done what I liked with local customs, history and geography; facts have been used when they were useful, and distorted or ignored when they were inconvenient. Only four of my characters bear the names of real people; the Emperor Akbar; his sons, the princes Salim and Daniyal; and Shaik Mobarek, his spiritual adviser. Moreover, of these the only personage drawn with any regard for the truth is the Emperor.

And now I want to explain why I have chosen as my scene India at the end of the sixteenth century. My object has been to carry the reader away from the machinery of a life that is familiar to him, to avoid the mention of names or places that hold associations that are foreign to my purpose, to obtain an attention undistracted by the social and economic problems of our day. I am aware, however, that it is dangerous to fly too far. The story-teller who soars out of our earthly geography and history altogether starts with too great an emptiness before him. He has to tell you everything from the beginning; it cannot be taken for granted that in his super-lunary world the sky is still blue, the grass still green. Such excessive freedom is tiresome to him and his readers alike.

But take India in the reign of Akbar;—enough, and not too much, is at once outlined on the canvas. You see, I imagine, a vague picture of emperors and elephants, white marble palaces, palm trees and so on—nothing very precise, but plenty of fine, confused colouring for a background. And that is what I want. Your comfortable, normal ignorance is what I count upon. It supplies all that is necessary; the rest is my affair.

Few novelists have made their intensions clearer than has Myers in this preface. In *A Passage to India* Forster is attempting to deal with local and specific problems of race, class and culture. His fine handling of his material gives it a general significance; but Forster does not set out, like Myers, to deal with the 'ethical and philosophical preoccupations of humanity'. It is indeed, among its predecessors, to the *Princesse de Clèves* that we can most profitably relate the Indian tetralogy of Myers. Like Madame de La Fayette, he is concerned with moral sensibility in a world where absolute values are still acknowledged. But whereas Madame de La Fayette's work is almost exclusively concerned with the conduct of man in society, Myers is also concerned with the various ways in which philosophers and thinkers have interpreted the universe and man's relation to it.

The canvas of Myers is so vast that I cannot attempt to outline the story, which is conveyed sometimes through direct narrative,

sometimes through indirect narrative, sometimes through extracts from diaries and sometimes through a journal in the form of a letter (this about fifty pages in length!). Not infrequently these devices of variation are clumsy and the narrative calls for considerable concentration from the reader. For our purposes today it is sufficient to know that the main characters, apart from the Mogul Akbar and his two sons, Salim and Daniyal, are Amar, Rajah of Vidyapur, his wife Ranee Sita, her lover (the Rajah's brother-in-law) Hari Khan and the Rajah's young son, Prince Jali.

Just as in the *Princesse de Clèves* the high-principled love of the Duc de Nemours for Madame de Clèves destroys the Prince de Clèves and causes his wife to retire to a convent, so the love of Hari Khan for Sita leads to his death and impels the Rajah Amar to put his Buddhism into practice and take to the road with a begging-bowl.

The connecting figure of the narrative is Prince Jali and he links *The Root and the Flower* with *The Pool of Vishnu* (1940) in which there are many new characters and themes. Jali is not only suited to the link part as a young boy who grows into manhood and learns from his personal relationships, but also because he has a Christian for a mother, a Buddhist for a father, a Moslem for an uncle, a Jain as a nurse and a Brahmin as a teacher. Among his playfellows are found adherents of every variety of Hinduism. Thus Myers is enabled to examine, without too portentous a machinery, the main forms of religious thought. The attitude of Akbar to his two sons and the intrigues of Mabun Das and Shaik Mobarek enable Myers at the same time to investigate the motives of political action and the moral bases of political conduct.

The Near and the Far opens with Prince Jali stepping on to the balcony of the tower of his father's palace and looking in awe at the plain below:

He clung to the truth of appearances as something equal to the truth of what underlay them. There were two deserts: one that was a glory for the eye, the other that it was weariness to trudge. Deep in his heart he cherished the belief that one day the near and the far would meet. Yes, some day he would be vigorous enough in breath and stride to capture the promise of the horizon. Then, instead of crawling like an insect on a little patch of brown sand, swift as

deer he would speed across the filmy leagues; the wind would be singing on his ears, the blood tingling in his veins, his whole body would be a living arrow. Almost, already, in his imagination he could foretaste that joy—of seizing within his grasp, of clasping to his heart, the magic of things seen afar. To fling himself into the distance in one bound, to flash into the visionary scene before it had had time to transform itself—almost he knew how!

Towards the end of the book Jali really does leave the palace. For the last time he looks at the 'visionary line of hills':

His father directed his eyes to a faint, purple streak upon the belt of gold; that was a crevice in the mountainside, a shadowy gorge through which the cavalcade would pass. And beyond—but Jali was no longer listening; his thoughts had stopped to hover over that spot. How could that mystic *There* ever become *Here*? It could not—without changing. It existed only in its thereness. No one ever got *There*—unless, perhaps, in the impossible Heaven of the Christians.

The Indian novels are, indeed, a journey to the meeting of the near and the far, to the place where *There* becomes *Here*. (Let us remember that Forster's *India* says 'No, not yet' and his sky says 'No, not there'.) This meeting is accomplished in the latter part of *The Pool of Vishnu*, in the community of Mohan and Damayanti, who have abdicated from their kingdom, leaving it to Mohan's younger brother Bhoj and his wife Lakshmi, who devote their lives to keeping up appearances. This ideal community is set up under the guidance of a Wise Man, the Guru.

I for one am getting tired of novels where one character knows all the answers from innate saintliness, from having had an 'experience' in a monastery or from having met a Yogi. We have had in recent times Larry in Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge*, Bruno in Aldous Huxley's *Time must have a Stop* and Sebastian in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. These astral bodies of Gerald Heard leave me unconvinced. We are asked to accept that they have penetrated to the heart of the mystery. We are never given a detailed account of the steps by which they arrive at 'illumination'. But these *illuminati* must not be confused with Myers's Guru.

The true Yogi, as Arthur Koestler puts it:

believes that each individual is alone but attached to the all-one by an invisible umbilical cord; that his creative forces, his goodness, trueness and usefulness

can alone be nourished by the sap which reaches him through this cord; and that his only task during his earthly life is to avoid any action, emotion or thought which might lead to a breaking of the cord.

It follows, then, that a Yogi believes that nothing can be achieved by action from without but only by conviction from within. When Damayanti is explaining about the Guru to Jali she says:

Bhoj and Lakshmi thought us rather eccentric in our mode of life, but nothing more than that. The Guru's influence was not so strong or widespread then, nor had we or Bhoj realized what the Guru's teaching meant. India has always been full of holy men preaching the religion of freedom and equality, but without producing any *practical* results. It was not until we moved here and began putting the Guru's ideas properly into practice that Bhoj and Lakshmi came to understand that those ideas were different and dangerous.

When Hari Khan talks to the Guru and is reminded that the Guru was once famous for his healing of the sick he says:

You seem to have reached a greater simplicity and honesty than most men. How have you done it?

The Guru replies:

Hari Khan, my life has been—and still is—like the peeling of an onion. One skin after another of self-deception and pretence do I strip off. In the process my eyes water and my vanity smarts.

The Guru, then, like the Yogi, has had experience of miracle-working and saintliness, but he differs from the Yogi in the practical outcome of his teaching, which Myers describes at length in his account of the community at Hawa Ghar, near the Pool of Vishnu.

The style of Myers is workmanlike and well adapted to the needs of his great work, but it has little of the charm or grace of Forster. It is often clumsy and pedestrian; in its generalities approaching the professional philosopher's, in its colloquialisms, the journalist's. At its best, however, it has superb precision, and weight. Towards the end of *Rajah Amar* the dissolute Prince Daniyal shows symbolically the fate that awaits the low-caste girl Gunevati. The prince enters juggling with three balls which he holds in his hand like the life of Gunevati:

At last with a nod he dismissed his interlocutor and, still keeping his balls dancing in the air, advanced slowly towards the waiting group. All remained where they were; but the white cat, which had got up from Gunevati's lap, was yawning and stretching itself. It now came running across the floor and, on reaching Daniyal, rubbed itself against his legs, causing him to miss one of the coloured balls. Then it threw itself down on the ground in front of him, lying on its back, and with a mew invited him to play with it. But Daniyal had frowned when the ball dropped, and now, lifting the sole of his right foot, he placed it on the cat's head. Then with a swift and smiling glance at his spectators he slowly pressed his foot down. One after another the bones in the cat's head could be heard to crack, and, when this sound came, the Prince's eyes glanced for one smiling second into those of Gunevati. The cat's paws were beating in the air; its body rose stiffly in an arc and then collapsed in spasms; a little pool of blood spread out on the floor.

Very slowly Gunevati slipped off her seat and lay upon the ground prostrate.

The change of tempo from the airy juggling to the final sentence of death, the slow destruction of the cat, is a masterpiece of dramatic presentation.

More important still, this episode is not a mere exercise in horror. It leads to the final decision of Rajah Amar to cut himself loose from Daniyal. This act of cruelty exposes to the Rajah the corruption in the soul of Daniyal and he rushes at the prince and tries to strike him with his sword. Amar is struck down by a negro attendant and his action is unavailing. But it had to come about, so that Amar might convince himself of the hopelessness of compromising with evil and the necessity for attacking it, wherever it might be found. Amar from now on abandons the contemplative life and at the beginning of *The Pool of Vishnu* we find him a beggar, acting out his own salvation.

In the later years of his life Myers became an adherent of Communism. He was intellectually convinced; he had no personal knowledge of the proletariat or the class-struggle. Mohan and Damayanti put their protests against materialism and oppression into action. This Myers could not do. His upbringing and his tastes belonged to a minority culture. In the end the strain of the dichotomy became too great and in 1944 he committed suicide.

At least one critic has fallen into the error of lumping Myers and Forster together as liberals and humanists. Myers is in the tradition of humanism, but he is more than a student of human affairs.

At the beginning of *The Longest Journey*, Ansell the Cambridge undergraduate is arguing with Rickie and others of his friends:

Rickie spoke again, but received no answer. He paced a little up and down the sombre room. Then he sat on the edge of the table and watched his clever friend draw within a square a circle, and within a circle a square, and inside that another square.

'Why will you do that?'

No answer.

'Are they real?'

'The inside one is—the one in the middle of everything, that there's never room enough to draw.'

Let us compare this with a passage from Virginia Woolf's novel, *The Years* (1937):

Millions of things came back to her. Atoms danced apart and massed themselves. But how did they compose what people called a life? She clenched her hands and felt the hard little coins she was holding. Perhaps there's 'I' in the middle of it, she thought; a knot; a centre; and again she saw herself sitting at her table drawing on the blotting-paper, digging little holes from which spokes radiated.

For both Forster and Virginia Woolf the problem of personality and communication is paramount. In the late work of Virginia Woolf, indeed, personality as a conception seems to be painfully slipping away from her. For both of them the attempt to communicate may receive only the answer of the Marabar caves—'boum!' Anarchy and solitude.

Myers, however, can accept the facts of personality and communication. They are not problems to him. Thus he is free to examine what is beyond personal relationships. Myers is more than a humanist; he is a philosophical thinker who sees man in the universe. To his searchings after truth he brought not only a fine moral sensibility, but also a deep religious (though not dogmatic or sectarian) faith and a deep spiritual conviction.

We are indebted to the following for permission to reproduce material from the works of L. H. Myers: Jonathan Cape Ltd. for *The Pool of Vishnu*, *The Near and the Far*, *Rajah Amar* and *The Root and the Flower*; Putnam & Co. Ltd. for *The Orissers*, *The Clío* and *Strange Glory*.

Joyce and the Artist's Fingernails

S. L. GOLDBERG

ONE of the best-known passages in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is that in which Stephen Dedalus brings his aesthetic theory to a resounding conclusion. Having expounded his views on Beauty and Art, he turns to what he calls the natural aesthetic 'forms': the lyrical, the epical, and the dramatic. The first is directly personal, emotional and unselfconscious; in the epical the personality of the artist expresses itself in a narrative that flows around his characters and action:

The dramatic form is reached when the vitality which has flowed and eddied round each person fills every person with such vital force that he or she assumes a proper and intangible aesthetic life. The personality of the artist, at first a cry or a cadence or a mood and then a fluid and lambent narrative, finally refines itself out of existence, impersonalises itself, so to speak. The aesthetic image in the dramatic form is life purified in and reprojected from the human imagination. The mystery of aesthetic, like that of material creation, is accomplished. The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails.¹

All kinds of critical sermons have been preached on this text, from denunciations of Ireland to denunciations of I. A. Richards, but even in the more humdrum context of Joyce's own work it has a special interest—if only because, being so obviously a pointer to his artistic direction and so unobtrusively ambiguous, what the reader makes of it is usually an index of what he makes of Joyce's art itself. And in fact it is impossible to grasp what Joyce meant by impersonal, dramatic art without also understanding what it means in his actual practice, and especially in his central achievement, *Ulysses*.

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¹ *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 1942, pp. 244-5

Leaving aside Joyce's more pious readers who are evidently so overcome by the image of a non-existent God indifferently paring his fingernails that they cannot follow what Stephen says, there are three very popular misconceptions of his meaning.

The simplest is that of the plain, blunt technician, to whom the most important fact about Joyce is his use of the stream of consciousness, and to whom the novel is impersonal and dramatic when it manages to dispense with the 'omniscient narrator' in favour of direct representation by dialogue, narration by a character, the stream of consciousness, and so on. As he sees it, Stephen is foreshadowing Joyce's technical achievement in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, where he tells his story without appearing to tell it at all; the novelist paring his fingernails is really boasting, 'Look! no hands!'

A more common interpretation is that Joyce is advocating such a complete impartiality or neutrality of moral attitude as amounts to indifference—a sort of super-Flaubertian Realism. The impersonal novelist is he who portrays life with the implacable objectivity of a recording angel; apart from that, he simply shrugs his shoulders or pares his nails. To express opinions about morality, to make judgements, is not his business. And was it not Joyce who replied, when his brother wanted to discuss Fascism, 'Don't talk to me about politics. I'm only interested in style'?¹ Many readers find this same attitude, seasoned with a mistrustful distaste of mankind, typical of all his work. To some it is a matter for rather naïve approval, to others for indignant rejection; but in either case they see Joyce, intent on his fingernails, coldly withdrawn from the dust and heat of ordinary mortality.

A third group of critics (mainly American by birth and Roman Catholic by persuasion) offer a more subtle and in some ways more plausible view. Joyce is a Realist, they agree, but one whose apparent indifference is only ironic, a tactic by which to parody and expose the absence of values in the world he so aloofly portrays. And Stephen is part of that world. When he maintains

¹ Quoted by Richard Ellman in his introduction to Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, 1958, p. 23.

that the artist must avoid moral judgements, he only betrays his crippling self-conceit, his futile Aestheticism, for Joyce, his creator, saw that the most realistic and impersonal picture of modern life is that which demonstrates its infinite distance at every point from a real, impersonal spiritual order and a real, impersonal moral code. What makes him a great artist, indeed, is that while he looks as if he is paring his fingernails, he is really wielding a spiritual scalpel.

Each of these views obviously has something to recommend it, for each of them does point to some aspect of Joyce's work. On the other hand, each one of them in its own way also provokes the same uneasy doubt: if that is all Joyce means theoretically, if that is all his work means imaginatively, is that the kind of moral intelligence of which vital and significant novels are made? Is not his work perhaps richer, dramatically and morally, than some of his admirers think?

Joyce certainly made no bones about moral and social judgements in his first book, *Dubliners*, for all its naturalistic Realism. It was not his fault, he wrote to Grant Richards, that 'the odour of ashpits and old weeds and offal hangs round my stories. I seriously believe that [by suppressing the book] you will retard the course of civilisation in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having a good look at themselves in my nicely polished looking-glass'.¹ *Dubliners*, in fact, is the book that really does fit the parodic-Realism view of his work; and it is quite apparent from *Stephen Hero* (which is probably more accurate *historically* than its final 'version' as the *Portrait*) that the young Joyce did start off with just such a conception of his art in mind. He would dissociate himself from the joyless, priest-ridden materialism of Ireland; he would 'vivisect' its decay; he would reveal it as an Inferno that parodied Dante's; and in some way, he felt, by expressing his own nature freely and fully, he would 'bring to the world the spiritual renewal which the poet brings to it'.² The young man clearly took his moral purposes as an artist very

¹ *Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Stuart Gilbert, 1957, pp. 63-64.

² *Stephen Hero*, 1944, pp. 25, 129-30, 141, 165, 171; and *passim*.

seriously indeed; equally clearly, however, he was much more definite—and excited—about what he rejected than about his proposed ‘spiritual renewal’. For all his proclamations about the moral force of art, a work like *Stephen Hero*, or any work conceived in the same purely critical and negative spirit, could hardly embody a vital and positive vision of life. Realism of that kind represented a dead-end. And it is Joyce’s dawning realisation of this, I believe, that lies behind Stephen’s theory of ‘dramatic’ art in the *Portrait*.

Not all the confusion about his meaning is the critics’. In the course of his discussion Stephen himself seems to shift between three different, though related, ideas. The first is the simple difference between different literary *genres*: lyric, narrative, and drama. The second is the difference between progressively complex attitudes to life and the art-forms they require for expression. Certain *modes* of art—the drama and novel most notably—ideally express, not pure subjective emotion or even personal judgements *about* life, but rather a vision *of* life, which is objective in the sense that we cannot separate the artist’s ‘attitudes’ from our sense of his work as a reflection (though not necessarily a naturalistic reflection, of course) of life as it ‘really is’. This impersonal mode of art is only possible, Stephen implies, when the artist’s ‘attitude’ embodied in the work has grown so complex, so self-aware, so mature that it demands a specific and searching image of reality for its expression, which it shapes and orders as a pervasively informing presence. He calls this kind of art ‘dramatic’ only by analogy, however. Drama is the *genre* in which the author must express his meaning in and through a projected image of a common reality, but the particular conventions of the *genre* are not necessary to Stephen’s mode. Thus a work in any form might fit his description: a lyric like ‘O Western Wind’ hardly answers, but what of such impersonally mature ‘lyrics’ as ‘Dejection: An Ode’ or ‘Sailing to Byzantium’? Nevertheless, Stephen also implies that ‘dramatic’ art is the best, so that in addition to these descriptive distinctions he also entangles a third—a normative one. Only in the ‘dramatic’ mode, apparently, do the characters and

action assume 'a proper and intangible aesthetic life'. This now suggests that 'epical' art is only an imperfect version of 'dramatic', and imperfect because not self-subsistent, integral, self-explanatory, impersonally meaningful without necessary reference outside it to the peculiar situation and characteristics of its maker. In general, therefore, Stephen is speaking only of the artist as artist, and suggesting that the artist's 'attitudes' or values are what project and at the same time in-form his image of life, that it is ultimately *their* meaningful rhythm, *their* enactment, not the artist's ordinary personality or that of an assumed narrator, that is like a divine Providence moving behind yet within his work. All this has nothing whatever to do with naïvely naturalistic objections to the 'omniscient narrator' in the novel; omniscience is implicit in the very convention of third-person narration, and the demand for 'dramatic' realisation of values in the novel is based on an analogy with the drama deeper than the merely technical. In the end, this aspect of Stephen's theory is really the invocation of a principle that applies to all art: that style and technique be organically related to the 'subject', so that all together make one total and impersonal articulation. This was the lesson that Joyce, like Henry James, was one of the first novelists to learn from Flaubert. Nor, we might notice, is there any suggestion in Stephen's theory that narrative 'point of view' (or any other device for that matter) is anything but a conventional medium for moral point of view. When we examine Joyce's use of it in *Ulysses*, for example, we find that the stream of consciousness marks no essential difference from say, James's use of it. Both novelists make us participate in their characters' point of view, and when they need to supplement it or qualify it or endorse it, they both abandon it for 'omniscient' narration. In the matter of technique, just as Stephen merely reaffirms the basic principles of the craft of fiction, so Joyce the novelist, for all his virtuosity, punctiliously observes them.

Nothing illustrates Stephen's theory in all its aspects better than a comparison between *Stephen Hero* (which Joyce abandoned about 1906) and *Ulysses* (written between 1914 and 1921). There

are a number of passages in the early book that Joyce obviously reworked for the later one—the account of the citizen who later became the central figure of the ‘Cyclops’ episode, for example, and Stephen’s critical attitude to the Irreconcilables which later became the dramatic form and substance of the whole episode. An even more interesting case, however, is the funeral of Stephen’s young sister, some of the very phrases of which were later incorporated in the ‘Hades’ episode of *Ulysses*. Here is part of the early account:

At the mortuary chapel Mr Dedalus and his friends had to wait until the poor mourners had first been served. In a few minutes the service was over and Isabel’s coffin was carried up and laid on the bier. The mourners scattered in the seats and knelt timidly on their handkerchiefs. A priest with a great toad-like belly balanced to one side came out of the sacristy, followed by an altar boy. He read the service rapidly in a croaking voice and shook the aspergill drowsily over the coffin, the boy piping responses at intervals. When he had read the service he closed the book, crossed himself, and made back for the sacristy at a swinging gait. Labourers came in and bore out the coffin to a barrow and pushed it along the gravel-path. The superintendent of the cemetery shook hands with Mr Dedalus at the door of the chapel and followed the funeral slowly. The coffin slid evenly into the grave and the grave-diggers began to shovel in the earth. At the sound of the first clods Mr Dedalus began to sob and one of his friends came to his side and held his arm . . .

[When the returning funeral stops at a pub, the drivers of the carriages are called in to share the second drink.] They all chose pints and indeed their own bodily tenements were not unlike hardly used pewter measures. The mourners drank small specials for the most part. Stephen, when asked what he would drink, answered at once:

—A pint—

His father ceased talking and began to regard him with great attention but, Stephen feeling too cold-hearted to be abashed, received his pint very seriously and drank it off in a long draught. While his head was beneath the tankard he was conscious of his startled father and felt the savour of the bitter clay of the graveyard sharp in his throat.

The inexpressively mean way in which his sister had been buried inclined Stephen to consider rather seriously the claims of water and fire to be the last homes of dead bodies. The entire apparatus of the State seemed to him at fault from its first to its last operation. No young man can contemplate the fact of death with extreme satisfaction and no young man, specialised by fate or her step-sister chance for an organ of sensitiveness and intellectiveness, can contemplate

the network of falsities and trivialities which make up the funeral of a dead man any higher without extreme disgust.¹

Although the observation, as always in *Stephen Hero*, is as engagingly direct as the animosity, it is all too obvious why Joyce abandoned a novel in this vein. For example, the painstakingly 'objective' description of the funeral and the hero's moral judgement on it fall so promptly apart, that Stephen's reflections, when they arrive, come like an unexpected slap on the ear: nothing about the funeral itself seems to warrant so violent a reaction to it. Even more embarrassing, however, is the judgement on Stephen himself: again, nothing about his 'rather serious' reflections seems to require the conclusion that he is a specialised organ of sensitivity and intelligence. The apparent difference between the author's sense of his hero and ours only causes us to wonder if Joyce is not being ironical at Stephen's expense, to search for a possible subtlety. Unfortunately, nothing in *Stephen Hero* resolves the doubt; the tone is almost uniformly flattering to Stephen. (It is perhaps significant that Joyce is able, within the space of two pages, to speak of his hero's 'complex radiance of thought' and his 'ingenuous arrogance', to present him as a 'wholehearted young ecogist' but not an 'inhuman theorist', although in no case does the judgement seem unquestionably apt.²) We are inevitably driven outside the book to try to discover how seriously Joyce meant us to take him. Exactly the same difficulty arises with another of his works, the play, *Exiles*. It has recently become fashionable to discover profound ironies in his treatment of its hero, Richard Rowan, and subtle metaphysical meanings in what the somewhat stiff, factitious dialogue and action do *not* express. The only alternative to supposing such unlikely—or at least undemonstrable—meanings in the work is that the author has failed to make us share his valuation of his hero, that, while he could criticise Rowan for some of his faults, he could not see those his creature most intimately shared with his creator. It is

¹ *Ibid*, pp. 149–50.

² *Ibid*, pp. 109–10.

perhaps significant that in both *Stephen Hero* and *Exiles* the hero's intellectual genius is an essential—and totally unacceptable—premise of the work; in both cases, the work itself seems to be precisely the kind that its own hero would write. In other words, though one is a narrative and the other a play, Stephen's account of 'epical' art fits them like a glove: in both the author's personality merely flows round the action; the characters in both fail to achieve a proper and intangible aesthetic life of their own. The shaping values, which ought to stand in the maturity of self-examination, of a full sense of the complexities of life, patently do not.

The case is very different with the *Portrait of the Artist*, of course, but to see Joyce's art at its most richly 'dramatic' we must turn to *Ulysses*, and the 'Hades' episode offers a characteristic, though not exhaustive, example.

In the first place, Paddy Dignam's funeral is dramatically rendered and evaluated not through the consciousness of an incredibly super-sensitive young man, but through that of an ordinarily sensitive and intelligent burgher. We, as readers, participate in Leopold Bloom's view of the funeral, not simply learning of 'objective' details through his registration of them, but also perceiving the significance of those details in the context of the other experiences he brings to bear upon them. The second difference from the art of *Stephen Hero*, however, is that we also see *through* Bloom's consciousness as well. At various points in the chapter the narrative 'point of view' shifts so as to reveal Bloom as himself one of the 'objective' elements of the situation, with a significance in it that, ironically, only we can appreciate. The observer is himself 'placed'. Nevertheless, there is no sharp discontinuity between his sense of the funeral and ours. The actual effect of our shifting viewpoint is less to satirise Bloom than to qualify him and, finally, to *endorse* his moral consciousness, limited though it is, as a fit vehicle for our own. Indeed, the structure of the 'Hades' chapter—like that of the book itself—could be said to be the dramatic affirmation of Bloom and the essential human virtues he embodies. Two little episodes, the very beginning and

the very end of the chapter, mark the progress in his position. On both occasions he is snubbed. He is the last invited into the funeral carriage before it sets off; he is obviously the outsider:

Martin Cunningham, first, poked his silkhatted head into the creaking carriage and, entering deftly, seated himself. Mr Power stepped in after him, curving his height with care.

—Come on, Simon.

—After you, Mr Bloom said.

Mr Dedalus covered himself quickly and got in, saying:

—Yes, yes.

—Are we all here now? Martin Cunningham asked. Come along Bloom.¹

At the end he is snubbed more violently. He notices that the pompously respectable lawyer, Mr. Menton, whose attitude to himself he pithily describes as 'hate at first sight', has dented his hat:

Got a dinge in the side of his hat. Carriage probably.

—Excuse me, sir, Mr Bloom said beside them.

They stopped.

—Your hat is a little crushed, Mr Bloom said, pointing.

John Henry Menton stared at him for an instant without moving.

—There, Martin Cunningham helped, pointing also.

John Henry Menton took off his hat, bulged out the dinge and smoothed the nap with care on his coatsleeve. He clapped the hat on his head again.

—It's all right now, Martin Cunningham said.

John Henry Menton jerked his head down in acknowledgement.

—Thank you, he said shortly.

They walked on towards the gates. Mr Bloom, chapfallen, drew behind a few paces so as not to overhear. Martin laying down the law. Martin could wind a sappyhead like that round his little finger without his seeing it.

Oyster eyes. Never mind. Be sorry after perhaps when it dawns on him. Get the pull over him that way.

Thank you. How grand we are this morning.²

The similarity of the two situations only underlines the difference: the devastating finality with which Bloom's silent comment places Menton and all he represents. Against the backdrop

¹ *Ulysses*, 1937, p. 79.

² *Ibid*, p. 107.

of eternity, it is Bloom whose dignity is genuine and inviolable, who has, and deserves to have, the last word. This is a moral authority he has accumulated over the course of the chapter; and it may suggest, perhaps, how the structure of Joyce's art, far from a static pattern of 'symbols' and 'leitmotifs' as it is commonly supposed, is actually a poetic action, a development of moral awareness—Bloom's in the first instance, ours in the last—in which characters, events, setting, symbols, and techniques are all finally absorbed.

By focusing the various themes enacted in the chapter as a whole, Bloom's thoughts constitute the setting in which Dignam's funeral is judged. He notes an old woman peering through a curtain at the funeral ('glad to see us go we give them so much trouble coming'), or Dedalus senior, ageing, 'full of his son', and remembers his own children; he observes the deadness of a passing street, a house where a murder was committed, the lack of vitality in people and places; and as he does so, both Dignam's death and his own unfolding attitudes towards it gradually assume a richer significance in the contexts his observations project: the continual cycle of life and death, the creeping paralysis of age and decay, the paralysis of Ireland, and the ineluctable isolation of the individual in life as in death.

For about the first half of the chapter Bloom is himself rather more the object of our attention than what he observes or thinks. In part he seems the representative of the universal condition of his society: as each of his fellow mourners is cut off from the others by his private troubles, and cut off, too, from real family life, so Bloom is still further isolated from the rest by his race, his notorious cuckoldry, and his father's suicide. All through *Ulysses* Bloom is qualified by the pathos of his spiritual isolation, placed by our compassion as Dignam is by his. Yet part of his integrity lies in his utter lack of either self-importance or self-pity, and this is subtly played off against the attitude of his companions and his society. When old Dedalus, for example, rages in egotistical violence against his son, Bloom silently judges him, accurately but with sympathy: 'noisy selfwilled man. Full of his son. He is

right . . .¹ Or again, when the others exchange conventionalities about suicide, it is Bloom who realises what it really involves of loneliness and pain. As the funeral progresses, Bloom's compassion for his companions, for children, for people down on their luck, for animals, and for Dignam and Dignam's family, plays with increasing force against empty-hearted conventionality and the feeble heart of the city through which he passes. In short, it is he who registers the decay all round him, and realises—in the sense that includes *exhibits*—at least something of the vitality it lacks.

This is especially so in the second half of the chapter. Once the funeral reaches the cemetery, Bloom's consciousness unmistakably becomes both the central arena of the action and the agent bringing diverse experience together and infusing it with form and value. The texture of his monologue grows denser, subtler, ranging more freely as it develops the implications of the earlier section. His thoughts continually turn from death to life, always perceiving one in relation to the other, and sharply antiseptic to the excesses of self-indulgent grief. The meaning of Dignam's burial emerges from his sombre meditations—upon the constant renewal of life, for instance, as he ponders the graveyard-keeper's sexual vigour; or upon the widowed Queen Victoria at last abandoning grief for her Consort: 'her son was the substance. Something new to hope for not like the past she wanted back, waiting. It never comes. One must go first: alone under the ground: and lie no more in her warm bed.' At the open grave he suddenly thinks, 'If we were all suddenly somebody else'. Among the insidiously sentimental 'stone hopes' of the graveyard, 'old Ireland's hearts and hands' paralysed in eternal and useless grief, he perceives the waste; garlands of bronzefoil, as he observes, mean less than real flowers that live and die.²

Towards the religious aspects of the funeral (including the same toad's-belly priest as appeared in *Stephen Hero*, incidentally), Bloom's attitude is completely sceptical, but it is not quite the same as Stephen's was. Bloom is a pagan, no doubt, but neither

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 99–101, 94, 102, 105.

stupid nor superficial. His naturalism permits him to recognise that, however conventional the gestures of the priest and congregation, 'he has to say something'; death requires more than 'shovelling them under doublequick'. Yet 'once you are dead you are dead'—the heart, 'seat of affections', is truly broken, and we must live as best we can even by the 'love that kills'.¹

The climax of the whole chapter is preceded by Bloom's sight of a well-fed rat among the graves, the main significance of which is precisely the unnerving horror he does *not* feel (and which some of his theologically sounder critics think he should). For Bloom to 'accept life' on the conditions he does, he must also accept the rat: it has a final, demonstrative necessity. By looking it in the face without panic, he assumes a qualified but genuine authority:

The gates glimmered in front: still open. Back to the world again. Enough of this place. Brings you a bit nearer every time. Last time I was here was Mrs Sinico's funeral. Poor papa too. The love that kills. And even scraping up the earth at night with a lantern like that case I read of to get at fresh buried females or even putrefied with running gravesores. Give you the creeps after a bit. I will appear to you after death. You will see my ghost after death. My ghost will haunt you after death. There is another world after death named hell. I do not like that other world she wrote. No more do I. Plenty to see and hear and feel yet. Feel live warm beings near you. Let them sleep in their maggoty beds. They are not going to get me this innings. Warm beds: warm fullblooded life.²

Though there are obvious ironies in Bloom's failure to achieve that warm full-blooded life, he is never mean, never hostile to life.

After this passage, the narrative point of view once again leaves Bloom's for the more 'objective' rendering of the Menton episode. Bloom's attitudes have been established, related to those of others, commented on by silent juxtapositions, explored and placed; we have increasingly participated in his sense of the funeral. Now, at the end, we see him again in relation to others, and the shift is the means by which our response is crystallised: the 'omniscient' view swings behind Bloom's so that we cannot distinguish one from the other. The moral values of character and

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 107.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 106-7.

artist—with all qualifications granted—here converge. The art speaks impersonally, but only the more subtly and eloquently for that.



Obviously, Stephen's description of 'dramatic' art posits an artistic detachment of some kind or other. As I have suggested, many critics would define it as that characteristic of *Finnegans Wake*, taking the *Portrait* and *Ulysses* as its 'lyrical' and 'epical' forbears. A moment's reflection might suggest the improbability of so programmatic an interpretation, but only a critical reading of Joyce's work can reveal its falsity. Apart from anything else, Drama depends on the artist's maintaining a middle position towards his material, a mixture of involvement and detachment. With too close an involvement, his work becomes lyrical (or at most 'epical'); with too great a detachment, he begins to seek an impossible holism, to try—whether in the belief that whatever is right or whatever is wrong—to portray everything that is simply because it is. And in a work of art where *everything* can be included, as in *Finnegans Wake*, drama gives way to an abstract, substantially unreal dialectic. Properly speaking, both the *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, although in different ways, are Joyce's dramatic works.

Like other heroes of dramatic art, Bloom serves his author's meaning both as dramatic agent and dramatic image. In 'Cyclops', for instance, his blundering but very relevant stand for Love against hatred and violence, just because it is founded in his very person and actions, measures the citizen's attitudes, and does so far more effectively than the denunciations of *Stephen Hero*, even though the debasement of the language of politics—which is also the language Bloom must use—can be rendered only by the gigantic parodies that envelop the scene. Those critics who suppose that Joyce is simply parodying the whole of modern life will have it, nevertheless, that Bloom's 'sentimentality' fares no better than the citizen's *realpolitik*; both, in their view, are ruthlessly parodied, just as sexiness is parodied in 'Nausicaa' or the clichés of

communication in 'Eumaeus' and the mechanised chaos of modern society in the book as a whole. Similarly, with 'Hades', they see Joyce savagely exposing Bloom's complete unconsciousness of any Christian significance in the death and burial of Paddy Dignam, and the spiritual barrenness of the society his unconsciousness represents. To them, the world of *Ulysses* is a static Inferno inhabited by lost souls incapable of real moral action. Certainly that it is one way of looking at modern life. In all its essentials—its spiritual absolutism, its transcendental disgust, and its fundamental incapacity for *dramatic* expression—it is the way the protagonist of *Stephen Hero* looks at it. Yet *Ulysses*, however subtle its symbolism, however elaborate its parodies, and however much spiritual implication may be found in them, is as a whole surely more compassionate, and more vitally dramatic, than a vast symbolic machine motivated only by a consuming hostility to all the emptiness and misery of mass industrial society. Its hero and its ironies are rather more complex than that.

Even as a political image, Bloom never becomes merely a stock-figure of intellectual debate. Joyce was not the man to subscribe to any particular creed or platform, of course; when he turned his hand to journalism in Trieste, he still viewed politics as a moralist, deeply sceptical, despite his intense patriotism, of 'those big words that make us so unhappy'. All through *Ulysses* (and especially in 'Circe') he steers his hero between the twin temptations of social complacency and bourgeois idealism, between the blind passions of self-interest and self-immolation, quietly vindicating the small words in which sanity and moral freedom are to be found. Their incarnation is the unlikely figure of Bloom, humble, confused, yet within his limits critical and integrate. Clearly, no one knew better than Joyce that a society of Blooms would not be the New Jerusalem, but, as Bloom says to the citizen, he is not talking about the New Jerusalem, he is talking about injustice. The structure of 'Hades' is typical of *Ulysses* as a whole: the dramatic tension derives from the interplay of what Bloom makes, of his world and what Joyce—and we—make of Bloom, yet the fact that it is an interplay, not a simple contradiction, is what

generates the deepest and most complex irony in Joyce's vision of life: although as a dramatic image Bloom is the hapless victim of his society, as a dramatic agent he also remains outside it—partly because he is excluded by it, but partly because he possesses the moral vitality fairly to judge it.

The effect of his freedom is to add a necessary dimension to his world. He represents both the general condition and the irreducible surd, the complicating factor; to explore him fully Joyce needed both the resources of a sophisticated, analytic realism and the deeper, affirmative images of myth. Joyce's achievement, in fact, was to portray and place him, deeply compromised as he is, without degrading him into a Bovary, or a Babbitt, or a Kipps, or a sentimental, Chaplinesque 'little man'. It hardly needs saying that such understanding and respect were beyond the artist as a young man. Yet although Joyce's concern with 'dramatic' art is sometimes interpreted as a retreat from life, it was on the contrary part of his attempt to come more closely and more profoundly to grips with reality—a reality that included himself. Where his early 'objectivity' and 'realism', harbouring a bitter but unexamined hostility, could express only the ambiguity of his personal attitudes, we might say of *Ulysses* what he himself said of Ibsen's work: to the torment of its critics, it reflects the obscurity of life like a mirror.

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The October number will include the following articles on Renaissance Drama: 'Timon of Athens' by C. Wilson Knight; 'The Ambivalence of Bussy D'Ambois' by C. L. Barber; 'The Retrograde Genius of John Marston' by Gustav Cross; and 'Tragedy: Religious and Humanist' by L. Lerner, as well as 'The Intricate Alliance: The Novels of R. K. Narayan' by William Walsh and 'A Nation's Odyssey: The Novels of Hugh MacLennan' by George Woodcock.

Ezra Pound: *Piers Plowman* in the Modern Waste Land

CHRISTINE BROOKE-ROSE

IT has been said of Pound that he languishes in the shade of Eliot just as Ben Jonson, Landor and Browning languish in the shade of Shakespeare, Shelley and Tennyson. A more striking analogy, to my mind, is that of Langland languishing in the shade of Chaucer.

Like *The Cantos*, Langland's *Vision concerning Piers Plowman* is a vast, apparently chaotic and plotless epic, constructed on several levels of apprehension and yielding the secrets of its organisation only to those who are prepared to wrestle with them. Like *The Cantos*, it carries the reader along on sheer rhythm and vitality of language, whether or not he can grasp the totality. Like *The Cantos* it has, among the axe-grinding, passages of magnificent poetry as condensed as anything Chaucer could achieve. But a seemingly sprawling poem of great length, even when it contains exquisite passages, is unlikely to be popular. Langland has become the property of scholars, passionately devoted not only to the immense textual problems but to the elucidation of the numerous quotations and topical allusions, political, social, economic and ecclesiastic. Similarly American University departments have been busy glossing *The Cantos*, and if some of Pound's allusions are even more recondite than Langland's, he at least is alive to answer questions, even humorously confessing to the invention of a god the scholars had been unable to trace.

Both Pound and Langland are fundamentally moralists, both intransigent and idealistic, each hammering at what he believes to be the root of human evil, each naïvely reiterating that if only man could eradicate this the world would be a better place.

then the whole scene shifts to eighteenth-century America where the 'process' continues in Adams's actions (Canto 62).

Both Langland and Pound love quoting, and both love giving their sources: *as David seith in the sauter . . . ; Austyn and Ysodorus ayther of hem bothe / Nempned me thus to name . . .*, etc. Similarly: *sez Orage about G.B.S. . . . ; scripsit Woodward, W. E. . . . ; (Cato speaking) . . .* etc. But both are also extremely allusive. Pound quotes in many languages, assuming knowledge just as he assumes understanding of obscure historical, political, mythical and other references, often purely private. So the whole of *Piers Plowman* is riddled with Latin tags and quotations, as well as political and economic allusions, some of which remind one strangely of Pound.

For example, Avarice confesses:

And with lumbardes lettres . I ladde golde to Rome,
And toke it by taille here . and tolde hem there lasse.

(Passus V. 251-2)

From the time of Gregory IX the papacy used Italian bankers as agents for the deposit, transport and exchange of money, especially of papal dues. The bankers' representatives abroad received these from collectors and forwarded them to the Camera, for which service they got part of the money transferred, also charging for the exchange of currency. The bills of exchange were known as 'letters of exchange', and the opportunities for corruption were immense. In other words Avarice received the full amount due but when he got to Rome he counted out less. Not only do Pound's banking Cantos spring to mind (*spies and persons counterfeiting—or abetting in same—/ our continental bills of credit*, Canto 62), but more specific references:

Where the Pope goes is lack of money
Because of the mass of clerics
who bring cheques for the banks to cash . . .

(Canto 41)

The Jews were often known as Lombards, and Langland shows traces of anti-semitism for much the same reasons as Pound.

Earlier Avarice had said that he learnt from Lombards and Jews how to clip coins on the way to the Camera (Passus V, 242-4). Again Langland refers to the Jews at Avignon in Passus XIX, alluding to the fact that the papacy's exile had brought prosperity to the Jewish community, which the Popes treated with consideration because it catered for the needs of the papal court. 'God amend the pope', he cries later, for he was much distressed, not only by the schism, but by the corruption it caused.



The most interesting parallel, however, is in the construction and presentation of the two poems. It is the inner poetic method in both, rather than the formal plan, which affords the real clue to the overall meaning, in spite of the fact that the formal plan in both has several layers of complexity.

The four basic keys to *The Cantos* are strangely similar to those which unlock *The Vision Concerning Piers the Plowman*. They are: (1) the echoing orchestration, or what Hugh Kenner calls the Ground Bass; (2) the ideogrammatic method, which we may compare to Langland's constant shifting in four-level allegory; (3) the 'periplum' [*sic*] or voyage of discovery among facts, paralleled by Langland's weird and unconventional use of the mediæval dream-formula; and (4) the metamorphoses.

Piers Plowman is formally divided into two main parts, the *Visio* (Prologue to Passus VII) and the *Vita* (Passus VIII-XX). In the *Visio* (the World of Affairs), the author falls asleep and dreams he is in the 'field full of folk' (pilgrims, palmers, merchants, minstrels, pardoners, beggars, knaves and priests, a king and his knights, etc.). A lady comes down from a tower and speaks to him; she is Holy Church, and she says that Love is the readiest way to heaven, and Truth is the best of all treasures. He asks how he can know Falsehood and she bids him turn to see him.

Then follows one of the most fantastic *danses macabres* in literature, in which allegorical figures mingle with real people and become flesh and blood: the Lady Meed, Simony, Civil, Theology, Conscience, Reason and many others have strange adventures

with merchants, pardoners, friars, judges, the King himself. There is a mad ride to London (for which sheriffs, assizers, summoners and deans are saddled as horses to carry Meed, Falsehood, Flattery etc.), to see the King about the quarrel as to whether Meed should marry Falsehood or Truth: Dread was at the door, and heard the judgement, and bade Falsehood flee, Liar leapt through the by-lanes, nowhere welcome, but pardoners took him in, leeches (physicians) invited him, spicers asked him to be their shopkeeper, and finally the Friars fetched him in and clothed him as a friar. The dreamer wakes and passes into the next dream. We are back in the Field of Folk, which has a different aspect, that of a world of contrition. Conscience is hearing the confessions of the Seven Deadly Sins. Hope seizes a horn, thousands of pilgrims throng to find Truth. Piers Plowman enters and says he knows Truth well, he has sown his seed and he will guide them, but first he must plough his half-acre and they must help him. More adventures follow, with Hunger and Waster sabotaging the labour. Truth bids Piers work before the famine comes, and promises a pardon to all who help him. A priest asks to see the pardon, which says *Et qui bona egerunt, ibunt in vitam eternam . . .*, and he declares it is no pardon at all. Piers tears it up in mortification. The dreamer wakes and muses on the meaning of the pardon: those that do well . . .

The *Vita* is a long sequence of more dreams, the author's quest, through more weird adventures among men and ideas, for *Do-Well*, or the World of Moral Interpretation (VII-XV), *Do-Bet*, or the Priestly Life (XVI-XVIII), and *Do-Best*, or the Episcopal Life (XIX-XX).

The plan thus simplified sounds schematic enough, but the execution is more akin to that classic film *Hellzapoppin* than to moral allegory. Dream follows dream with no schematism at all, ungainly abstractions become flesh and blood and mingle with human beings very much on their own often sordid level: the Seven Deadly Sins, for instance, confess as if they were the sinners not the sins, and they are in fact completely humanised; the people try to poison Hunger by feeding him, food being the

death of hunger. Piers Plowman appears and disappears at the oddest moments, in new guises: first as an honest farmer, servant of Truth, a married man humble and hard-working and obedient to the Church (portrait of Do-Well); later he is the man who can tell the nature of the Tree of Charity, who can expound the mystery of the Trinity, he is the Good Samaritan, he is Christ, he has the added virtues of teaching, healing and suffering (portrait of Do-Bet); next he is entrusted with the building of the Church of Christ, he is Peter, yet an ordinary ploughman again (Grace makes Piers his ploughman) with a job to do, Piers the Builder of the Barn (portrait of Do-Best); finally he vanishes altogether, after the wild confusion in the last Passus, with Anti-Christ overturning Truth and dashing kings and popes to dust, and Conscience declares that he will turn pilgrim and seek Piers Plowman.

The dream-like quality of the poem masks the didacticism. Abraham and Moses wander in and out as Faith and Hope. The dreamer is more and more puzzled. By the end of the Do-Well section he is still wondering what Do-Well is. It is one of the fundamental difficulties of *Piers Plowman*, but also its greatest charm, that there is no clear division between Do-Well, Do-Bet and Do-Best. They are all three introduced early in the Do-Well section, indeed by implication in the *Visio*, and continue throughout, precisely because the second and third are constant ideals while one is practising the first. After a long passage about charity, when the dreamer is told that Charity is God's champion and only Piers knows him, the dreamer says thank you, but what is Charity? It is a fruit on the tree of Patience, which grows in the heart, the land belonging to Piers Plowman. In Passus XVIII, a beautiful passage describes the author wandering wearily and falling asleep again: he dreams it is Palm Sunday and sees the Good Samaritan ride forth, but he cannot quite distinguish him, he looks like Piers Plowman; Faith (Abraham) proclaims the son of David and says that Christ is coming to joust in Piers's armour against the fiend. The crucifixion follows, vividly described in a swift breathless style: the two thieves are there with broken legs, a blind knight jousts with Jesus and pierces his heart, but is healed of his

blindness; at night the dead bodies rise from the graves; then from West and East come Mercy and Truth, and from North and South come Righteousness and Peace. What was lost by a tree is won back by a tree, death shall destroy death, says Mercy, but Truth, in a curious way, refuses to believe it.

The frequent puzzlement of even the chief protagonists, from Piers to Truth himself, increases the dreamy effect which blurs not only the formal plan and the didacticism, but also the allegorical schematism. Mr. Coghill has most succinctly brought out the four levels of allegory (literal, moral, allegorical and anagogical, as described in Dante's *Convivio* and ultimately going back to Origen and Augustine) in *Piers Plowman*:

<i>Sensus literalis</i>	Piers the Farmer	Piers the Teacher, Healer and Sufferer	Piers the Builder of the Barn
<i>S. allegoricus</i>	Laity	Clergy	Episcopacy
<i>S. moralis</i>	Do-Well	Do-Bet	Do-Best
<i>S. anagogicus</i>	God the Father	God the Son	God the Holy Ghost

All this is there but it does not explain the structure of the poem, because unlike much mediæval allegory (which is mostly, in practice, on two levels only, literal and moral), it is not mechanically applied. Langland's achievement is to make us pass from one level to another without realising it, indeed, to make us apprehend all levels at once. There are no placards saying: 'You are now entering the anagogic zone.'

Perhaps the easiest way to understand the structure of *Piers Plowman* is to think of it as a spiral, with the field of folk in the centre.¹ On one side of the field is the Dungeon and Satan's Castle of Care, on the other the Tower of Truth. As we go up the spiral on higher and higher levels we go through evil on one side and good on the other. The field of folk recurs at each level with enriched meanings, as a sinful, muddled place, as a place of contrition, as Piers Plowman's half-acre, as various kinds of *activa vita* throughout Part II, as the heart where grows the Tree of

¹ This was suggested to me verbally by Dr. J. W. Bennett, of Magdalen College, Oxford, some years ago. As far as I know he has not pursued the idea in print.

Patience (the land belonging to Piers Plowman), as the place of the crucifixion, as the field where the Barn is being built, as the battle-ground of Anti-Christ. Motifs recur on new levels: the Seven Deadly Sins implicitly throughout and explicitly again in Passus XIV; the Good Samaritan dream in Passus XVIII echoes Passus XVII, in which he is seen with Faith and Hope (Abraham and Moses) passing the wounded man who was going to Jericho (i.e. he himself must have been going to Jerusalem, and this foreshadows the Crucifixion), Faith and Hope passing the robbed man but the Samaritan alighting. People and allegorical figures move in and out, reiterating things with added significance. The theme of the Incarnation and Crucifixion is echoed and re-echoed throughout as the very centre-piece of the Field of Folk or *Activa Vita*, even from the very beginning, when Truth says of Love that heaven could not hold it, it was so heavy of itself, until it had eaten its fill of earth, when it became lighter than a linden leaf (Passus I); or again in Passus V, after the confessions of the Deadly Sins:

But in owre secte [suit, flesh] was the sorwe . and thi sone it ladde,
Captivam duxit captivitatem.

the sonne for sorwe ther-of . les sy3te [saw less] for a tyme
 Aboute mydday, whan most li3te is . and mele-tyme of seintes;
 Feddest with thi fresche blode . owre forfadres in derknesse,

Populus qui ambulabat in tenebris, vidit lucem magnam;
 And thorw the li3te that lepe oute of the . lucifer was blent [blinded],
 And blewe alle thi blissed . into the blisse of paradise. (498-503)

III

It is this system of foretastes and echoes which most reminds us of Pound's *Cantos*. He has himself described them as 'an epic poem which begins "In the Dark Forest", crosses the Purgatory of human error, and ends "in the light"'. It is certainly possible to think of Cantos 1-30 as Hell; of Cantos 31-41 (Jefferson-Nuevo Mundo), the 5th Decad (Siena-Leopoldine Reforms) and 52-71 (the Chinese dynasties and back to Adams in action) as Purgatory; with the synthesis of the *Pisan Cantos* (74-81) as a personal Purgatory; *Rock Drill* (85-95) and *Thrones* (96-109), which are flooded with light, as Paradise.

But Hell, Purgatory and Paradise are constantly superimposed on one another throughout. Even in the actual 'Hell Cantos' (14-16) the purgators appear (Blake, Dante, Augustine, and the Elysium Fields of earned paradise. The descent to Tiresias of Canto 1 is echoed in the opening of Canto 47 (*Who even dead, yet hath his mind entire! / This sound came in the dark / First must thou go the road / to hell*), and again in Canto 80. Both Hell and Paradise, as well as the Purgatory of *Activa Vita*, reverberate in the *Pisan Cantos* and in *Rock Drill*: *Le paradis n'est pas artificiel, / l'enfer non plus* (Canto 76), echoed several times, and again in *Rock Drill*: *Le paradis n'est pas artificiel / but is jagged, / For a flash, / for an hour. / Then agony* (Canto 92); 'Oh you', as Dante says / 'in the dinghy astern there' (Canto 93) echoed again as the very last line of *Thrones*: *You in the dinghey (piccioletta) astern there!* (Canto 109). On a more personal note, the *Pisan Cantos* can juxtapose the peace of this passage:

To study with the white wings of time passing
 is not that our delight
 to have friends come from far countries
 is not that pleasure
 not to care that we are untrumpeted?

with the almost infernal despair of:

is there a blacker or was it merely San Juan with a belly ache
 writing ad posteros
 in short shall we look for a deeper or is this the bottom?

(Canto 74)

I have called *Piers Plowman* a spiral. It is perhaps significant that the two most important concepts in Pound's prose criticism are the Vortex (which became a literary movement) and The Unwobbling Pivot (Confucius) in life's centripetal chaos. *The Waste Land*, which may be called *The Cantos* in miniature, is like a small spiral staircase in a narrow tower, in which reverberate the echoes not only of past cultures, but of other passages in the poem itself. *The Cantos* are a huge spiral, in a huge tower, with a vast and complex field of *activa vita* in the centre. *Thrones* is the top of the

tower, *Rock Drill* having pierced through the rock roof to the light, with constant reverberations, each one unexpected.

IV

It is the unexpectedness which, as in *Piers Plowman*, is so exciting and yet makes the poem so difficult. Pound's method has been called ideogrammatic. The Chinese ideogram juxtaposes various signs for facts or concepts to make a new fact or concept.¹ Whatever we call it, the technique is crucial to *The Cantos*, a continuous asyndeton in the juxtaposition of apparently disparate facts, often jumbled in time, forming as it were a giant agglutinative metaphor which extends itself not only for a passage, but for a whole canto, and indeed for the whole poem.

The Mitteleuropa Canto for example (35), and the Canzone d'Amore (36), are not only juxtaposed to each other but are placed in the middle of the Jefferson Cantos, the moral chaos of Europe counterpointing the ideals of 18th-century America, and perfect love counterpointing Europe's moral chaos. Similarly the leap from Nuevo Mundo (31-38) to Mussolini (41) is offset by the Fertility Rites and Circe (men into swine) of Canto 39, and by the *periplus* through the press and commercial squalor of Canto 40, each of these foiling the other and each full of further juxtapositions within (e.g. the *periplus* through the press and Hanno's voyage of discovery). If Langland does not put up placards to announce a new level of allegory, nor does Pound stop to explain why he leaps from Confucius to John Adams in action, or from Odysseus (in one sentence) to Guillaume of Aquitaine, or from Yeats and Arthur Symons to *Kuthera deina*, Botticelli, Chu Hsi and Malatesta: we simply leap with him. As Prof. Nevill Coghill has said, the gift of transferred and simultaneous thinking on several levels has something of the quality of metaphor (the union of similarity and dissimilarity—and what could be more dissimilar, in the allegorical schema, than the laity and God the Father?). It

¹ But are these broken elements alive in the mind at the time the ideogram is used? And might not a Chinese be equally excited by the original etymologies of a word like, say, *hydrodynamometer*? I prefer to describe Pound's method as one of juxtaposition.

is a gift which we have largely lost since the Middle Ages, and which Pound has done much to restore to us.

V

Facts, facts, facts—historical, cultural, social, political, agricultural, economic, private, mythical. Pound juxtaposes them endlessly as moving images, links them with echoes reverberating down the vortex of his poem, *a sufficient phalanx of particulars*. He sees himself as an Odysseus *polumetis*, on a voyage of discovery—the *periplus*—through facts. So Langland passes from one dream to another through a succession of varyingly weird representations of *activa vita*. The dream-formula is his *periplus*, Pound's *periplus* is 'the mirror of memory'. Both poems are full of people, fictional, historical or allegorical in Langland, fictional, historical or mythical in Pound. And in both poems they are constantly changing their nature or changing into one another.

Pound is obsessed with metamorphoses. This aspect of *The Cantos* has been so clearly dealt with by critics¹ that I do no more than point out the analogy. It is not only 'the throwing aside of mask after mask' (T. S. Eliot, *Athenaeum* 1919), but, as D. S. Carne-Ross has pointed out, 'it is a basic principle of *The Cantos* that all related characters can merge or meet, into one another' (*An Examination of Ezra Pound*). *Let us consider the osmosis of persons*, says Pound in Canto 29, but he starts doing so much earlier. Cantos 2-7 deal with passion myths, modes of love and violence in metamorphosis. The Helen theme (Danae, Eleanor of Aquitaine and others) is counterpointed throughout by the Cunizza theme (fidelity, Proene, Cabestan's lady and others), and various women whose flesh enshrined the ideal of eternal beauty merge into one another, as do gods and goddesses. His villains recur as archetypes of one another as do his heroes. We are reminded of Langland's strange allegorical figures whose very nature changes in contact with different human beings or different qualities

¹ See especially *The Metamorphoses of Ezra Pound*, by Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, O.S.F., in *Motive and Method in the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, Col. U.P. 1954.

Lady Meed is both bribery and reward, hence her marriage either to Truth or Falsehood); or of Faith turning into Abraham, and of the metamorphoses of Piers himself.

But it is not only the people who change. Pound has said in *Affirmations*: 'The undeniable tradition of metamorphoses teaches us that things do not remain the same. They become other things by swift and unanalysable process.' Pomona (she was wooed by Vertumnus whose very name means 'he who changes') recurs regularly to represent the cycle of the year, as does Atthis, whose spirit passed into the tree under which he died, flowers springing from his blood. The Cadmus story echoes in Cantos 27, 33 and 77, and the metamorphoses of rocks, the decomposition of the body and descent into plant life are dealt with in Cantos 27, 37 and 80. More important still is the metamorphic treatment of ideas. Apart from the explicit indictment against Usura in the two notorious 'Usura Cantos', Pound uses two major stories of transformation in order to 'make new' the idea that it is vicious to twist the will as usury does (the will is also strongly present in Langland, and the author-dreamer's name Long Will may be a pun): the story of Circe and the swine, and the Bacchus-Acœtes myth (the sailors change course to sell the god in Egypt and are therefore punished); as well as minor stories such as that of Midas. Similarly the idea that beauty is very hard to possess (*So very difficult, Yeats, beauty so difficult*) is treated in terms of metamorphosis stories (Danae, Acteon, Salmacis, Piere Vidal disguised as a wolf).

The whole structure of *The Cantos* is one of constant metamorphosis, as is that of *Piers Plowman*, through the not so dissimilar method of the allegorical dream-vision. Yeats, in *A Packet for Ezra Pound*, tells us how this metamorphic principle was to be applied in the new epic: 'Pound explained his plan of using as one theme (ABCD) the descent into Hell, as a second (JKLM) metamorphosis; repeating these; then reversing the first (DCBA) to fit the changing circumstances; introducing archetypal persons (XYZ) and a fifth structural unit, symbolised by any letters that never recur, to stand for contemporary events; finally setting all

sorts of combinations of ABCD, JKLM, XYZ, DCBA whirling together.'

VI

Whirling is just about the right word: like the spiral construction of *Piers Plowman*, in the centre of which lies the Field of Folk, or, in Pound, the modern waste land, seen each time from a new vantage point. But the *Piers Plowman* spiral, with its *activa vita* in the centre, seems to get wider and wider, like a vast megaphone put out from earth to heaven, whereas Pound's tower is conical, so that the circling gets smaller and smaller, the views of humanity at the centre change more and more swiftly, the echoes from below become more and more frequent, more and more resonant.

It is possible that *The Cantos* will not survive as *Piers Plowman* has: they are very much more allusive and difficult. Langland, for all his learning, was more widely understood in his day than Pound is now, whose references, usually esoteric and often private, though it could be argued that their presence may crystallise knowledge that would otherwise have been evanescent, assume much more knowledge than Langland's would in his own time. Langland is also more inventive: the metamorphoses, allegories and adventures are his own, whereas Pound's myths and much of his material (translations, letters and documents) are ready-made and what matters is the manner of presentation. The disadvantage of his method lies precisely in the juxtaposition: metaphor uses syntax to link disparate terms, it is a creative use of the small facts of languages; Langland passes from one level to another with metaphor as well as with racing narrative. Pound rarely uses metaphor, and his facts are simply put down one after the other asyndetically, or with endless lists of *ands*. Yet his acute sense of the unusual but right word—*le mot juste*—his wit and his uproarious gift for mimicry, his versatile but usually free and basically trochaic rhythm (*to break the pentameter, that was the first heave*) sweep us over such objections much as Langland's swift alliterative metre, richness of language and humorous dramatic presentation sweep us through

the didacticism and the oddity of what his people say and do. And always there are the echoes, linking the most distant passages, the most disparate facts throughout, at their best with added elements, at their worst mere repetitions, of which Pound is often humorously aware: METATHEMENON / *we are not yet out of that chapter* (Canto 77); *Thus increasing gold imports. / The gentle reader has heard this before* (Canto 38); *you who think you will / get through hell in a hurry* (Canto 46).

What is it that emerges most vividly from these two giant whirls? Perhaps each poet's extraordinary inclusiveness, an essentially medieval quality, born of the desire not only to assimilate the whole of reality but to interconnect all its multiple aspects. And love is the linking power, always, beyond the anger and the didacticism:

What thou lov'st well shall not be reft from thee

The ant's a centaur in his dragon world.

Pull down thy vanity, it is not man

Made courage, or made order, or made grace,

Pull down thy vanity, I say pull down.

Learn of the green world what can be thy place

In scaled invention or true artistry . . .

(Canto 81)

Fisshe to lyve in the flode . and in the fyre the crykat,

The corlue by kynde of the eyre . most clennest fflessh of bryddes,

And bestes by grasse and by greyne . and by grene rotis,

In menyng that alle men . myȝte the same

Lyve thorw lele byleve . and love, as god witnesseth.

(Passus XIV)

Or love descending (Cavalcanti's *Canzone d'Amore*):

Never adorned with rest Moveth he changing colour

Either to laugh or weep

Contorting the face with fear

resteth but a little

Yet shall ye see of Him That he is most often

With folk who deserve him . . .

(Canto 36)

And of love being fulfilled by the descent:

For hevene myȝte nouȝte holden it . it̃ was so hevy of hym-self,
 Tyl it hadde of the erthe . yeten his fylle.
 And whan it haved of this folde . flesshe and blode taken,
 Was nevere leef upon lynde . lyȝter ther-after,
 And portatyf and persant . as the poynt of a nedle,
 That myȝte non armure it lette . ne none heiȝ walles.

(Passus I)

Perhaps the attitude of posterity to *The Cantos* will be that of Langland's admirers towards *Piers Plowman*, which is similar to that of Pound himself towards life which gave him his material:

nothing matters but the quality
 of the affection—
 in the end—that has carved the trace in the mind
 dove sta memoria . . .

(Canto 76)

Dr. Donne's Sermon

Bury us both, caress each with warm hands,
 Frailty in each the other touches. There enhovelled,
 If earth insisted you who cavilled
 At your life's beginnings, breakings, ends,
 Must then submit rebuilding into ringed worm bands
 Of pallid flesh, earth fed. There shovelled
 Clay will dull your eyes, and bracelet hair dishevelled
 Lies, ears blocked to surface cries or sounds.

Why then will you now remember lineage:
 The template of a narrow hand, a face
 Bestowed, a body given, a plasm-twisted
 Skein of genes your token salvage
 Of a life unravelled, your spasm gift of race
 Your shards of a mould there broken, there encysted.

Stuart Slater

Du Côté de Chez Waugh

PETER GREEN

A *Handful of Dust* was published in 1934, at a time when Evelyn Waugh had already established himself as the social Junius of his age. Mr. Edmund Wilson has recorded his opinion that the novel is its author's masterpiece, but without giving any very clear reason why he thinks so. Mr. Eric Linklater has described it as a 'sinister, blood-chilling comedy', while Mr. Donat O'Donnell—a far from sympathetic critic—considers it Mr. Waugh's 'first "serious" novel'. Each, in a sense, is right. It is his masterpiece in the sense that when writing it he made the best possible use of his limitations as well as his undoubted talent. It is blood-chilling in the glimpse it offers us of its creator's personal dilemma. It is his first serious novel in so far as it advances from purely two-dimensional satire to the exploration of character and motive in depth; though his characters remain within well-defined categories, they are far more sharply differentiated as individuals. As a novel, *A Handful of Dust* achieved a balance between the warring opposites that make up Mr. Waugh's creative impulse: never again, it seems to me, has he quite achieved that perfect equilibrium.

We cannot evaluate *A Handful of Dust* with any accuracy until we know exactly from what standpoint the author is tackling his subject. It is generally stated that Mr. Waugh is both a ferocious snob and the flail of the Mayfair Upper Ten, without any real attempt being made to resolve this apparent inconsistency. What we have to find out is not so much *what* Mr. Waugh is attacking or defending, but *why*—a more difficult problem.

The *what* can be stated fairly briefly. Mr. Waugh has displayed, from the beginning, a consistent and steadily increasing veneration

for the landed aristocracy, and for the great country houses which form the visible symbol of a pre-industrial aristocratic culture. He is a convinced Roman Catholic who examines social *mores* from an explicitly religious viewpoint. His complementary targets for attack or ridicule are all those persons or institutions who threaten his jealously cherished ideal: and today that covers an extremely wide field. Conservative Jacobitism, an exaggerated romantic nostalgia for the *ancien régime*, is a psychological characteristic common to almost all satirists, from Juvenal to Swift; in Mr. Waugh's work it finds its naked apotheosis. The hair's-breadth balancing of sentimental nostalgia and cruelly exact observation is his constant formula for success.

Now Mr. Waugh's romantic nostalgia is in the direct line which stems from Carlyle and Ruskin and Matthew Arnold. It is soaked in the spirit of pre-Raphaelitism; it yearns after the neo-Gothic, it is cloudily charged with a glitter of pseudo-mediaeval pageantry and the rich products of the Kelmscott Press. It is no coincidence that Mr. Waugh's first published book was a biography of Rossetti, nor that his favourite among Rossetti's paintings was 'The Marriage of St. George', which James Smetham described, rather unfortunately for modern ears, as 'one of the grandest things, like a dim golden dream'. It is precisely that 'dim golden dream' which Mr. Waugh cherishes in his secret heart, and in defence of which he rides out, lance in rest, against the *parvenu* infidel beyond the pale.

The champion is, however, fighting under borrowed colours. Like all the most ardent pre-Raphaelites, Mr. Waugh comes from a solidly respectable middle-class background. It was a far cry from that suburban Hampstead villa to the feudal glories of Brideshead; and the remarkable thing is that Mr. Waugh has come so near to achieving the dream which he constantly pursues on paper. Yet—as *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* demonstrates only too clearly—there was a price to pay. Pinfold, like Rossetti, began to dabble in drug-taking through an inability to face the truth about his own nature. Pinfold feared, morbidly and through drug-induced hallucinations, the rejection of that class into which he

mad for so long projected his *persona*. It is not perhaps unfair—since Mr. Waugh hints as much—to equate these general problems with those he himself has faced at various stages of his career.

Mr. Waugh clearly has an absolute emotional faith in the constitution of English society as it still survived (though already a little shabby) in the period between the two wars. This faith is what gives his early novels their sharply defined strength. The semi-eponymous hero of *Decline and Fall* is very much on the outside looking in. Towards the end of the book Peter Pastmaster observes patronisingly to Paul Pennyfeather: 'You know, Paul, I think it was a mistake you ever got mixed up with us; don't you? We're different, somehow. Don't quite know how. Don't think that's rude, do you, Paul?' The endeavour to eradicate that 'difference', the persistent nagging consciousness of its survival, has led directly, via *Brideshead* and *Officers and Gentlemen*, to the psychological collapse, the morphine and chloral which Pinfold employs to keep reality at bay. It is a variation on a theme very familiar to Victorian artists who felt themselves at odds with their materialist society, yet dared not openly rebel against its rules. Pinfold is the inverted analogy of John Davidson or Francis Thompson; he too has heard the Hound of Heaven padding after him, with the added knowledge that it belongs to the most exclusive Celestial Hunt.

The hero of *A Handful of Dust*, Tony Last, has no inherited title himself, but he has done the best he could by marrying one—Brenda St. Cloud. Tony shares a good many of Mr. Waugh's known prejudices. He maintains a ruinously expensive country house, a Victorian Gothic folly that might have been dreamed up by Mr. John Betjeman:

the ecclesiastical gloom of the great hall, its ceiling groined and painted in diapers of red and gold, supported on shafts of polished granite with vine-wreathed capitals, half-lit by day through lancet windows of armorial stained glass, at night by a vast gasolier of brass and wrought iron, wired now and fitted with twenty electric bulbs . . . the bedrooms with their brass bedsteads, each with a frieze of Gothic text, each named from Malory . . . his own

dressing-room, Morgan le Fay, and Brenda's Guinevere, where the bed stood on a dais . . . all these things with which he had grown up were a source of constant delight and exultation to Tony: things of tender memory and proud possession.

As Eric Linklater puts it, 'he sees in English country houses . . . not only a creation of aesthetic value, but a symbol of an aesthetically satisfying way of life'. The theme of *A Handful of Dust* is the ultimate destruction both of this way of life and the romantic vision lying behind it. Right from the beginning, Mr. Waugh always envisaged the class he loved as threatened, in retreat.

A Handful of Dust is a remarkable example of what can be done with the most hackneyed and antiquated plot. A squire of the Manor whose wife betrays him with a worthless young man, and who then goes exploring in South America to heal his wounded sensibilities—could there be a greater cliché? And yet in Mr. Waugh's hands the cliché gains peculiar strength: it is because the framework is so familiar that the subtle twists which it is given have the power to affect our emotions so strongly. It is, too, a highly suitable vehicle for its author's emotional ambivalence, because we can never be quite certain when Mr. Waugh is parodying a stock situation and when he is in deadly romantic earnest. He has it both ways.

In this novel the clipped, meticulously observed conversation of the upper classes is most carefully managed so as to give the effect of realism. In fact, like Hemingway's American vernacular, it is a highly artificial device designed to distract the reader's attention from the essentially mythic nature of each scene. The impression of realism is heightened by another of Mr. Waugh's observation tricks, which might be described as the 'social objective correlative'. This is a device which he frequently applies to his characters: it consists of detailing a list of objects or habits connected with them which symbolise their nature and, more particularly, grade them accurately in the social hierarchy. Tony Last's bedroom tells us more about him than a chapter of character analysis. It contains:

the framed picture of a dreadnought (a coloured supplement from *Chums*), all its guns spouting flame and smoke; a photographic group of his private

school; a cabinet called 'the Museum', filled with the fruits of a dozen desultory hobbies, eggs, butterflies, fossils, coins; his parents, in the leather diptych which had stood by his bed at school; Brenda, eight years ago when he had been trying to get engaged to her; Brenda with John, taken just after the christening; an aquatint of Hetton, as it had stood until his great-grandfather demolished it; some shelves of books, *Bevis*, *Woodwork at Home*, *Conjuring for All*, *The Young Visitors*, *The Law of Landlord and Tenant*, *A Farewell to Arms*.

In the same way the spurious Orientalism of Jenny Abdul Akbar is also pin-pointed by the contents of her bedroom, a mass of *objets d'art* torn out of context without reference to their original function, culture, or spiritual significance. This is by no means merely aesthetic captiousness; it is a very sharp piece of cultural criticism which would be approved by any comparative anthropologist. Nothing could so drive home to us the fragmented nature of the age Mr. Waugh is criticising: an eclectic, syncretic age whose creative god was that arch-pilferer Picasso.

It is easy to forget that this novel is not only an exercise in pre-Raphaelite romanticism, but also a Catholic apologia. It is a highly effective performance from the latter viewpoint, since the Catholicism is implicit, not artificially imposed: there is no embarrassing theological *deus ex machina* such as disfigures the conclusion of *Brideshead* or Mr. Greene's *The End of the Affair*. It is quite easy to read the book and not realise that the morals are Catholic morals, the thematic material disposed round a firm spiritual core. Here is where Mr. Waugh preserves his balance to a nicety. Lady Brenda Last's sin is not merely social, but religious. It is not only that she has committed adultery with a cheap parasite: she has also lost all respect for the sacred unity of the family.

When John Andrew, her young son, is killed out hunting, there is nothing to hold Brenda to Tony any longer; and this gives Mr. Waugh his opportunity for a savage, exceedingly comic attack on the hypocrisies of the English divorce law, with all the solemn and emotionally disgusting mummery of private detectives and Brighton hotels. I find it very improbable that Mr. Waugh was agitating for easier divorce; on the contrary, it seems almost certain that his attitude was that of the strict Catholic who

refuses to countenance divorce under any circumstances, and regards the whole process as a negation of emotional or spiritual truth. In the same way his humorous tilts at the Church of England—the absent-minded vicar who still imagines himself preaching to servicemen in India, for instance—can be seen as a reproach for religious vapidty rather than an undirected sneer at Christianity as such. The whole spiritual attitude of these people is crystallised by Tony, after John Andrew's death, when the bright social clichés have all failed in the face of sheer, raw emotion. Tony has been closeted with the vicar:

'Bad interview?' she asked, without looking up.

'Awful.' He drank the whisky quickly and poured out some more.

'Bring me one too, will you?'

Tony said, 'I only wanted to see him about arrangements. He tried to be comforting. It was very painful . . . after all, the last thing one wants to talk about at a time like this is religion.'

This is a novel, then, about people who have not so much turned their faces against God as forgotten what God looks like, what the very word means. It is a novel about people whose genuine emotions have all fizzled out, leaving nothing but boredom, casual lust, creeping fear, and material greed. To Brenda and her women friends adultery is simply another pastime, like shopping, telephone gossip, new clothes or the fortune-teller. Mr. Waugh knows very well the fragments he has shored against his ruins—*Love Among the Ruins*, the Catholic analogue of Mr. Huxley's *Ape and Essence*, was a well-named book; but the romantic Jacobite in him longs for *temps perdu*, the old-fashioned aesthete looks back to an age of elegant pattern and proportion.

Two chapters in *A Handful of Dust* are deliberate parodies (so far as their titles go) of the first volume in Marcel Proust's great meandering work; and it is interesting to compare the two writers. As Mr. O'Donnell has pointed out, Proust, like Waugh, 'was tenacious of childhood, with a feverishly romantic mind capable of turning a common seaside town into an enchanted city.' This romantic sensitivity to names and perhaps also his social

position led him to a veneration for the aristocracy.' But in proportion as Waugh's aristocracy was more threatened by the march of history, so he defended it in more extrovert and violent fashion: reactionary romantic though he was, he saw that the jazz age must be fought with its own weapons.

In the last resort—and this, perhaps, is the most terrifying thing about the whole book—Mr. Waugh knows very well that it is precisely his secret Gothic dream, his hidden romantic streak, that will destroy Tony by unfitting him to face up to a crisis in an adult way. Tony is at least half a schoolboy, with the fierce inarticulate sentiment of the adolescent; and Brenda's defection, coupled with her cold haggling over alimony, has the most devastating effect on him:

A whole Gothic world had come to grief . . . there was now no armour glittering through the forest glades, no embroidered feet on the green sward; the cream and dappled unicorns had fled . . . for a month now he had lived in a world suddenly bereft of order; it was as though the whole reasonable and decent constitution of things, the sum of all he had experienced or learnt to expect, were an inconspicuous, inconsiderable object mislaid somewhere on the dressing-table; no outrageous circumstance in which he found himself, no new, mad thing brought to his notice, could add a jot to the all-encompassing chaos that shrieked about his ears.

It is typical of Tony that his only reaction to this adult crisis is to run away in order to try and once more piece his shattered dreams together; at bottom he is as weak and spiritually deficient as Brenda herself. He seeks refuge, in Mr. Linklater's neat phrase, 'from the jungle of the social world in the wider jungle of the upper Amazon'. And, like all Utopians, he is looking for a City.

This City is in one sense physical; but in another it is a combination of Tony's private dream with the tradition that embraced Marcus Aurelius, Augustine, Sir Thomas More, and countless romantics down to Kenneth Grahame, who would certainly have recognised Tony's version of it:

It was Gothic in character, all vanes and pinnacles, gargoyles, battlements, groining and tracery, pavilions and terraces, a transfigured Hetton, pennons and

banners floating on the sweet breeze, everything luminous and translucent; a coral citadel crowning a green hill-top sown with daisies, among groves and streams: a tapestry landscape filled with heraldic blossom.

This final sequence of the book, in South America, is the least satisfying. In several senses, to begin with, it is too closely rooted in the author's own experience. The background material can all be found in the travelbook, *Ninety-Two Days*, which came out in the same year as *A Handful of Dust*; and the truth is both more fantastic and more impressive than the fiction. The eccentric Mr. Todd, for instance, who merely had an over-powering desire, being illiterate, to be read to from the works of Dickens, cannot compare with the real-life Mr. Christie, who was a religious lunatic on the grandest scale. Mr. Waugh owns to the same compulsive wanderlust as possessed Tony Last, but gives a slightly different reason for it:

For myself and many better than me, there is a fascination in distant and 'barbarous' places, and particularly in the borderlands of conflicting cultures and states of development, where ideas, uprooted from their traditions, become oddly changed in transplantation.

There are times when I like to picture Tony Last, not reading eternally to the dismal Mr. Todd, but organising a kind of tropical Bratt's Club among the Macushi Indians.

A Handful of Dust was a courageous novel to have written since it exposes Mr. Waugh at his most sensitive point—the curious intersection of his religious belief and his Gothic nostalgia. Mr. O'Donnell has had considerable fun with 'Mr. Waugh's private religion, on which he has superimposed Catholicism, much as newly-converted pagans are said to superimpose a Christian nomenclature on their ancient cults of trees and thunder'. It is certainly false to suppose, as English literary Catholics have a tendency to do, that there is some intrinsic and absolute connection between Roman Catholicism and a cultured squirearchy; or to identify the Catholic creed with the pseudo-mediaeval pre-Raphaelite dream. Mr. Waugh has a weakness for making these dubious equations, and they detract from the strength of his work.

They are present in *A Handful of Dust*, but here, uniquely, they add ironic point to the tragedy. Tony Last's inarticulate Betje-manism betrays him—first in his adult relationships, and finally to a cruelly apposite living death. The Catholic theology is in the author's moral attitudes, and not used to turn the characters into puppets in a crisis: they are pagans judged against implicit Catholic standards.

There are only two characters who come through with a clean bill of moral health: John Andrew and the groom, Ben Hackitt. This is as we would expect, and exactly in line with that late nineteenth-century tradition, which put a premium on children (still incorrupted, as Traherne had it, by the 'dirty devyces of this worlde'), and rural servants, who were supposed to have retained the rustic virtues undisturbed by urban hypocrisies. Everyone else, in varying degrees, is attacked systematically. The most superficially contemptible, Beaver, the social parasite *par excellence*, is an object of pity rather than hatred:

'But really, Brenda, he's such a dreary young man.'

'I know it all. He's second rate and a snob and, I should think, as cold as a fish, but I happen to have a fancy for him, that's all . . . besides I'm not sure he's altogether awful . . . he's got that odious mother whom he adores . . . and he's always been very poor. I don't think he's had a fair deal. I heard all about it last night. He got engaged once but they couldn't get married because of money and since then he's never had a proper affair with anyone decent . . . he's got to be taught a whole lot of things. That's part of his attraction.'

Notice the social assumption that money is as unquestioned a necessity as the air which Brenda Last breathes; a point which gains considerable force when these elegant monsters begin whipping in their tame solicitors and bargaining like Syrian fishwives over wills and allotments. Mr. Waugh belongs to a generation, and has been assimilated to a class, which actively needs money but prefers to pretend in public that it does not exist: hence the most evil character in the book is clearly assumed to be Mrs. Beaver (the prototype of Angus Wilson's Mrs. Currey), a fashionable interior decorator whose real business is discreetly oblique bawdy-house management.

There are only two divisions of function in Mr. Waugh's world: the exploiters and the exploited, vicious parasite and decadent host. There is a deliberate symbolism about their names which underlines the satirical purpose of the novel and gives it an air, at times of a mediaeval morality play, at others (as in the involved telephone conversations with Brenda from the Old Hundredth) of Restoration farce. Tony is quite literally the last of his line after John Andrew's death: and in the aristocratic myth, blood succession is of paramount importance. There are obvious obscene connotations in the names of Violet Chasm and Polly Cockpurse; and is it coincidental that the average reader knows only two facts, one fictitious, about Beavers—that they build dams and castrate themselves if pursued by hunters? (There is a suggestive sentence in the postscript to *Work Suspended* which confirms the symbolism: 'Beavers bred in captivity, inhabiting a concrete pool, will, if given the timber, fatuously go through all the motions of damming an ancestral stream.') Through cuckolding Tony, Beaver dams the natural development of his—and Brenda's—line; through his useless, unproductive, parasitical life he unmans himself as well.

And this, by a rather circuitous route, brings us back to the novel's epigraph, which contains the whole key to its complete understanding:

... I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

Mr. Edmund Wilson offers this gloss on the lines quoted:

... Except on the title page, the author nowhere mentions this fear. Yet he manages to convey from beginning to end, from the comfortable country house to the clearing in the Brazilian jungle, the impression of a terror, of a feeling that the bottom is just about to drop out of things, which is the whole motivation of the book but of which the characters are not shown to be conscious and upon which one cannot put one's finger in any specific passage.

That, as nearly always with Mr. Wilson, is good and fair criticism; but—again as nearly always, bearing in mind Mr. Wilson's spiritual

blind spot—it is not the whole truth, and certainly not the whole motivation. It is, certainly, Tony's motive; Brenda gets a glimpse of it; but the vast majority of the characters are totally *and by definition* unaware of this fear. Their sense of awe has atrophied through sophistication; like the characters in *Vile Bodies*, they will only be jolted out of their hedonistic dream by a supra-national cataclysm such as world war. They are spiritually dead.

Unlike many spiritual Tories who make writing their profession, Mr. Waugh has from his earliest years been very much *au fait* with the modern literature of the post-1914 period, and the significance of the trends in the visual arts. In *A Handful of Dust* his allusions to Proust hint fairly broadly at what he was trying to convey; and the epigraph, it seems to me, clinches the matter. It is taken, of course, from the first section of *The Waste Land*, and the lines immediately preceding it run as follows:

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
 Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
 You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
 A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
 And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
 And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
 There is shadow under this red rock
 (Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
 And I will show you . . . etc.

Now from other passages of Mr. Eliot's work we know that the Rock here symbolises the Church: the Anglican Church to be sure, in Mr. Eliot's view, but Rome has never hesitated to appropriate what seemed hers by right of seniority. Here is the main key, then: Mr. Waugh's conversion to Catholicism is what preserved him in this valueless urban jungle, which he now satirises both in expiation and as an act of faith. *Pulvis et umbra*: the dust is this society which has lost all spiritual awareness, the blind generation. (Did Mr. Waugh, I wonder, know that *umbra* in Latin is also the slang term for a party parasite such as Beaver shows himself to be?) The moral of the novel is, I take it, that only God, the Catholic Church in its universality, can bring back a sense of values to that specialised section of English society which Mr.

Waugh (for other, more romantic reasons which we have already examined) sets up as his personal Idol of the Market Place.

It is, I think, possible to take the argument one step further and say that *A Handful of Dust* can be read as an extended illustration of *The Waste Land* in fictional terms. There are certainly some most odd resemblances: the fortune-teller by feet can be equated with Madame Sosostriis; Brenda's vicissitudes have parallels both with the bedizened chess-player and (in her relations to Beaver) with the seduced typist who surrendered her virginity for much the same reason, because she was 'bored and tired'. (Brenda almost echoes her words.) There is the same nostalgia for past greatness, the same oblique reference to St. Augustine, the same feeling for 'a broken Coriolanus'—a role which would suit Mr. Waugh admirably: 'Shall I at least set my lands in order?' Certainly there could not be a closer parallel between the ultimate lesson which both works teach: that the rejection of spiritual and emotional truth—whether in respect of God or the relations of man and man—can only lead to sterility, madness, death: the blighted reign of Amfortas, the maimed Fisher King.

Mr. Waugh is the kind of propagandist who would appeal to what we are learning to call the Hidden Persuaders: he conceals the force of his beliefs under wit, style, scathing satire. But while we are laughing, like Kay and Gerda in the Hans Andersen story, the fragment of glass embeds itself in our hearts. In *A Handful of Dust* he balanced in perfect proportion, romance, satire, religious feeling, moral anger, wit, irony. But the poise could not be maintained. The religiosity became conscious, a convert's bludgeon; the romantic dream degenerated with success and acceptance into hard, intolerant snobbishness; the moral anger became mere pussy petulance, the satire furious polemic. A dangerous gap appeared between dream and reality; to judge by *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* it is widening with the years. But in *A Handful of Dust* every factor came together in unlooked for and unconscious harmony: for a brief moment conditions were perfect, with satire, fiction and religious apologia all fused in the single creative act. It was the apogee of Mr. Waugh's chancy art: and for all his technical skill, it was too good to last.

Danes Hill

Remembering the dead
who remain comforted
by ancient ritual
as I walk on Danes Hill

I think of all that ties
men to their ancestors
in skyscraper and cave
all share one heritage

By any Babylon
how can I fail to mourn
whose generation fills
the world's memorials

The hillside glows with gorse
there is no path across
whispering shadows stir
the quiet evening air

Forsaken centuries
have taken hold of me
and searching for relief
laden me with their grief

Karen Gershon

Notes on Contributors

KATHARINE GARVIN, who lives in Cambridge, teaches English and Latin in a school in Hertfordshire. She has edited *The Great Tudors* and published a memoir of her father. She also writes poetry and critical articles.

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ROBERT WALLACE teaches at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania. He was a Fulbright Scholar at St. Catharine's College from 1953-55, and is the author of *This Various World and other Poems*, 1957.

GEOFFREY TREASE lives in Herefordshire. He has written two historical novels, *Snares Nightingale* and *So Wild the Heart*, a survey of children's literature, *Tales Out of School*, and a number of children's books. His work in this field is the subject of a recent Bodley Head Monograph, *Geoffrey Trease* by Margaret Meek.

RONALD BOTTRALL, British Council Representative in Japan and Cultural Attaché to H.M. Embassy, Tokyo, since 1959, published his first book of poems in 1931. His later books include *Festivals of Fire*, 1934; *Farewell and Welcome*, 1945, and *Adam Unparadised*, 1954. He won the Syracuse International Poetry Prize in 1954.

S. L. GOLDBERG, a graduate of Melbourne and Oxford, is a Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Melbourne, where he edits the *Critical Review*. His book, *The Classical Temper*, will be published shortly in this country, and he is at present completing a book on seventeenth-century poetry.

STUART SLATER read mathematics at Otago University and is now in charge of the Research Section of the Child Welfare Division in Wellington, New Zealand.

CHRISTINE BROOKE-ROSE, a free-lance writer, novelist, poet and critic, was born in Geneva, educated in Brussels and Folkestone; she read English at Oxford and Medieval French at London University. Her publications include *A Grammar of Metaphor* (criticism), 1958; *The Language of Love*, 1957; *The Sycamore Tree*, 1958; and *The Dear Deceased*, 1960.

PETER GREEN's books include *The Expanding Eye* (1953); *Achilles His Armour* (1955); *The Sword of Pleasure* (1957); *Kenneth Grahame* (1959). A note on him appeared in *A Review of English Literature*, Vol. I, No. 2.

KAREN GERSHON came to England from Germany in 1938: her first collection of poems was published in 1959.

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